MARVEL

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X-MEN

Andy Kubert
matthew ryan

FATAL ATTRACTIONS

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EPIC COLLECTION

EPIC

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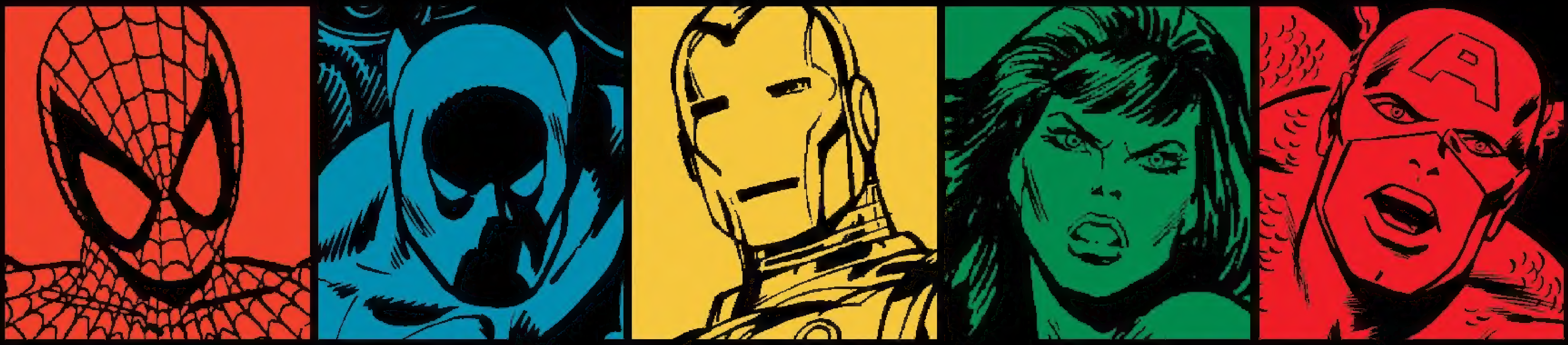

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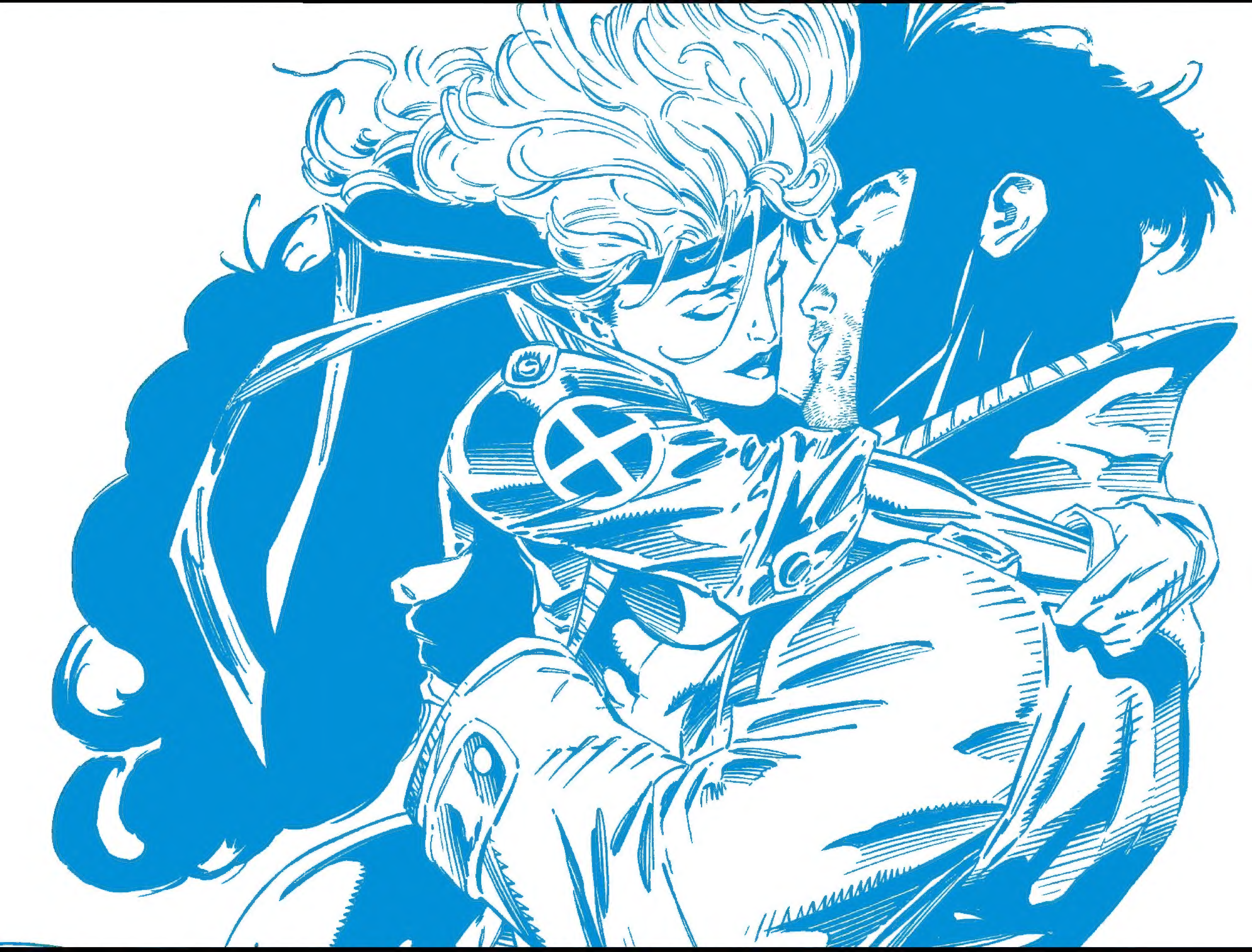

X-MEN

FATAL ATTRACTIONS

VOLUME 23

1993-1994

UNCANNY X-MEN #301-306, X-MEN #24-25, X-MEN UNLIMITED #2, WOLVERINE #75, GAMBIT #1-4 AND *X-MEN: SURVIVAL GUIDE TO THE MANSION*

X-MEN

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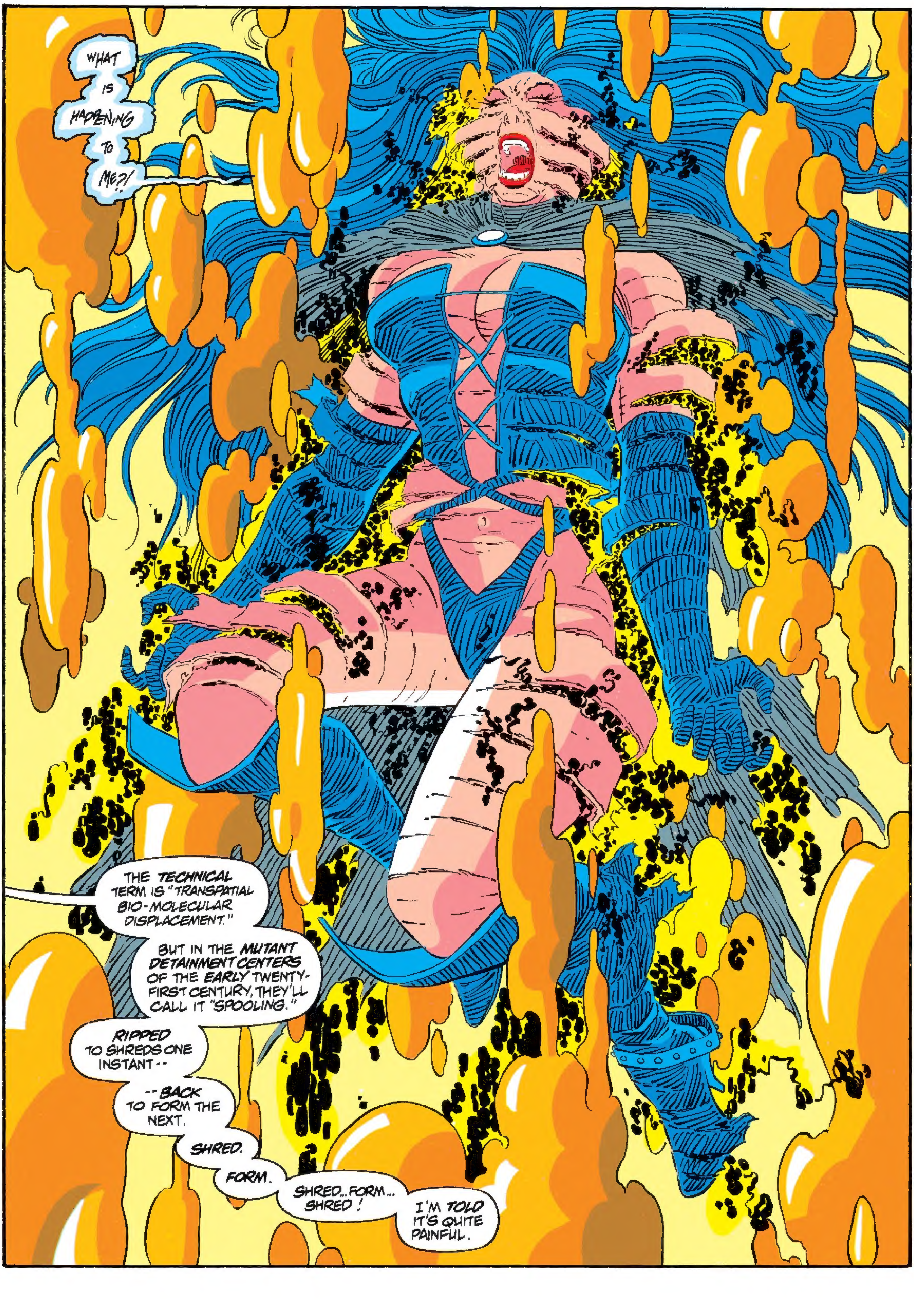
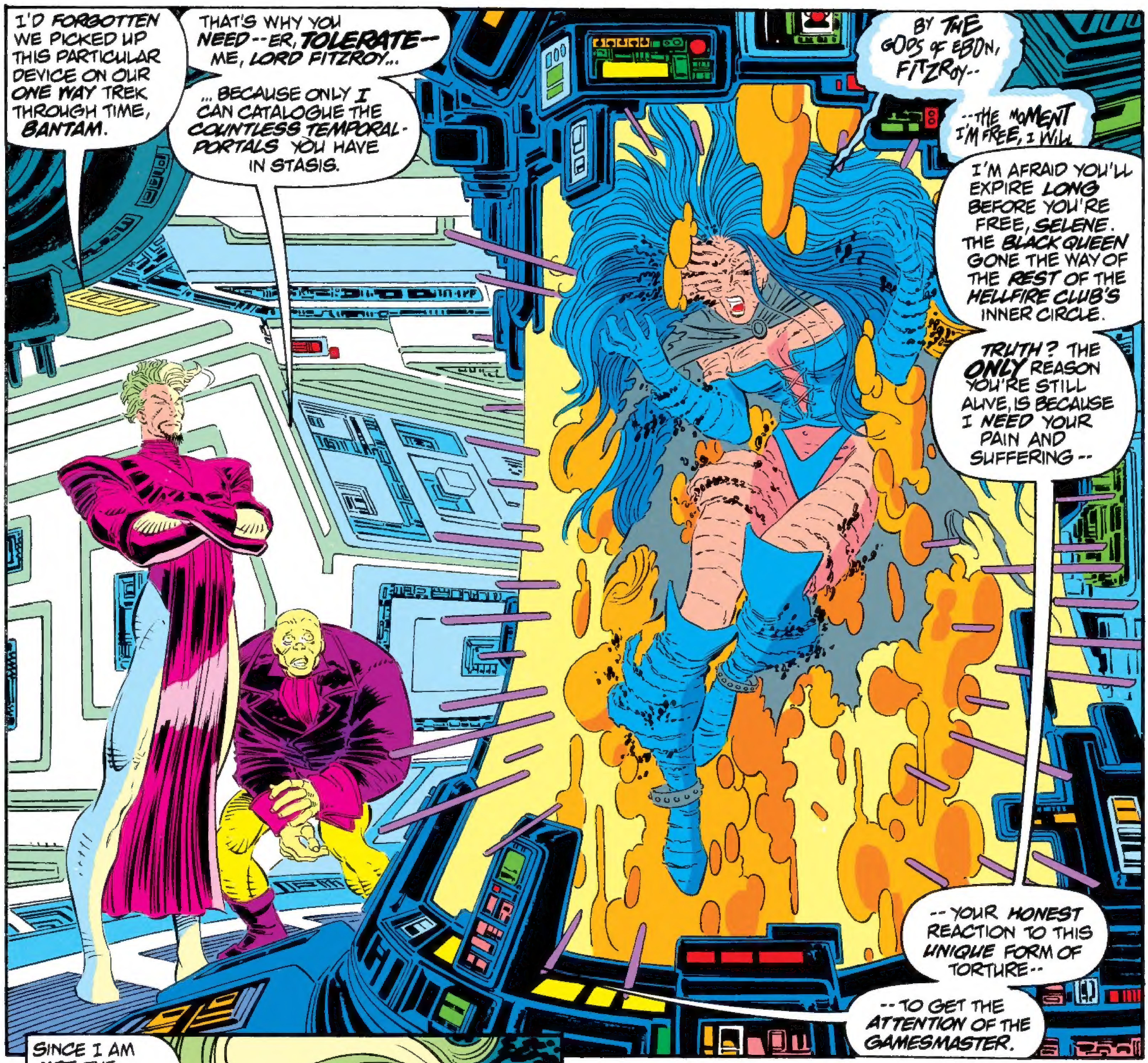
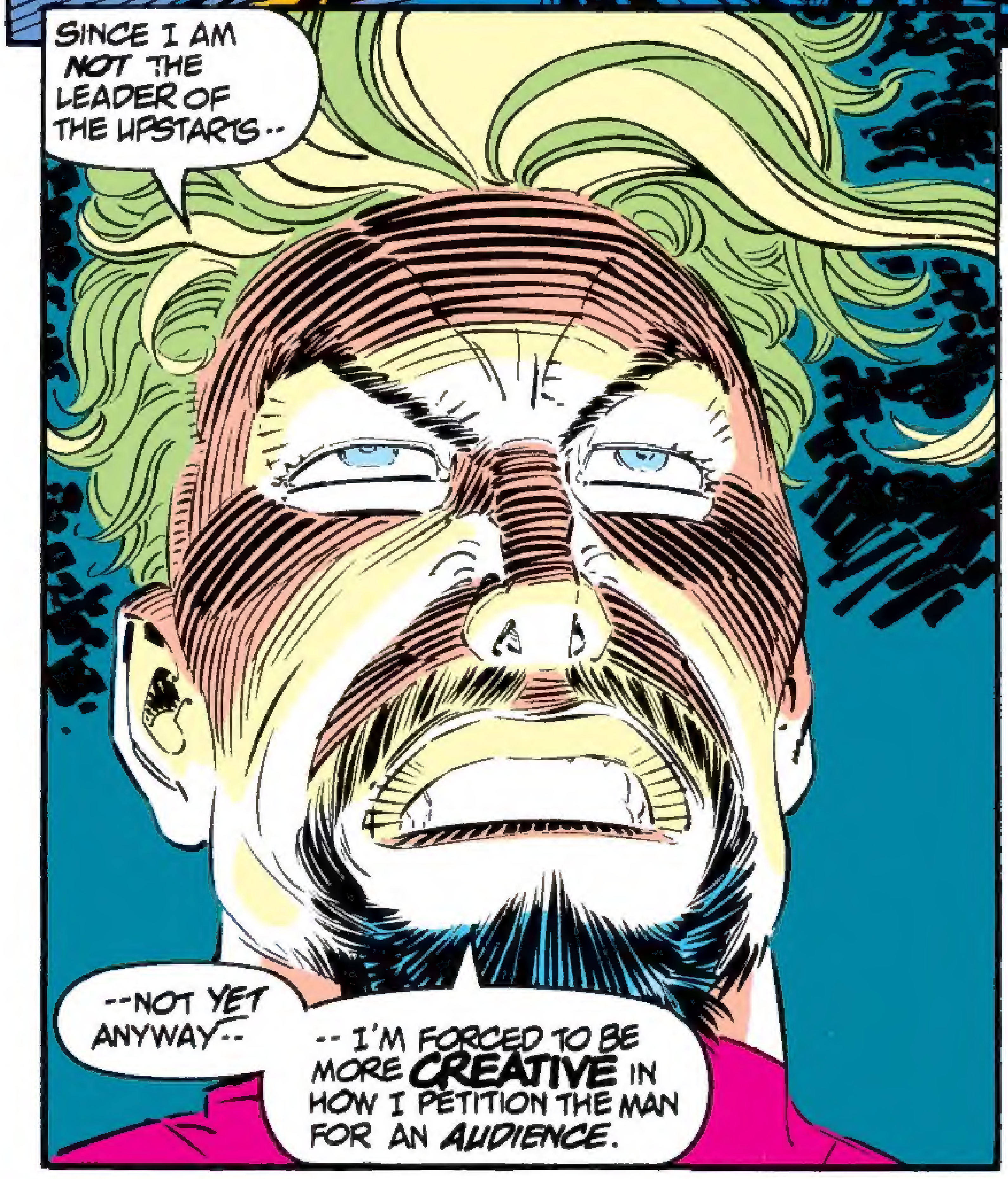
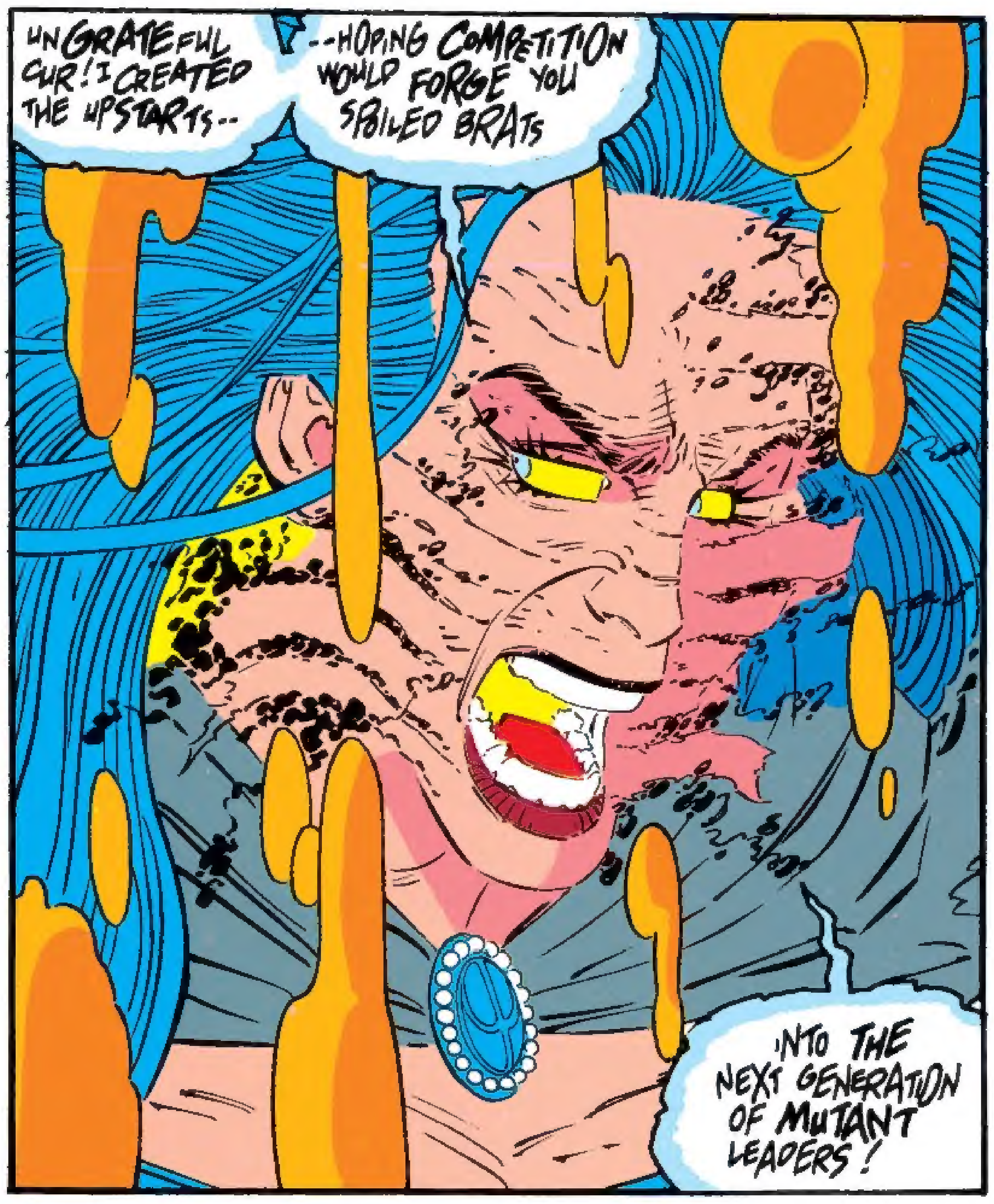
30 YEARS
X-MEN
1963-1993
ASSAULT ON AERIE
FEATURING
FORGE & MYSTIQUE!

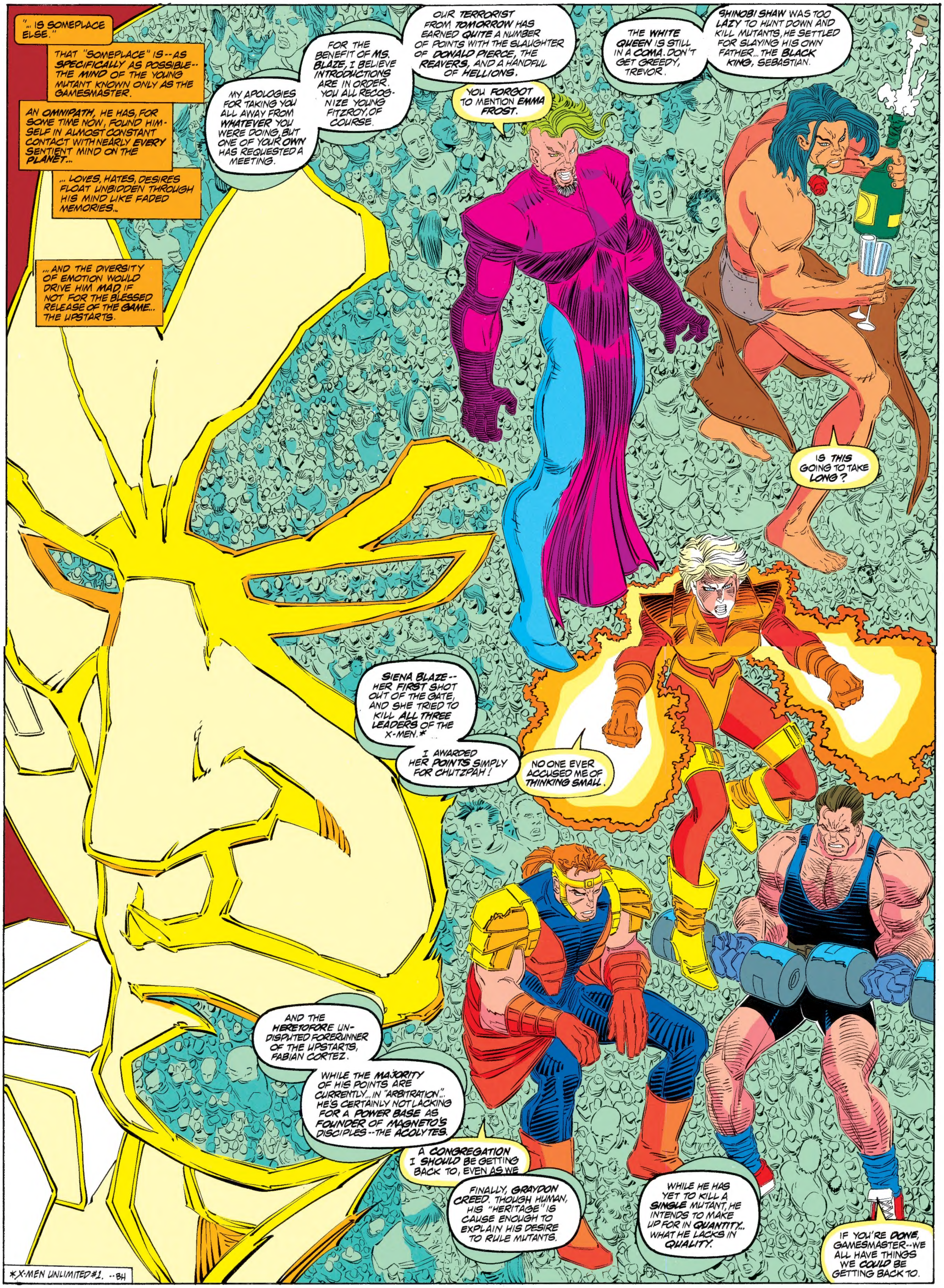

WHAT IS HAPPENING TO ME?!
THE TECHNICAL TERM IS "TRANSPATIAL BIO-MOLECULAR DISPLACEMENT."
BUT IN THE MUTANT DETAINMENT CENTERS OF THE EARLY TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY, THEY'LL CALL IT "SPOOLING."
RIPPED TO SHREDS ONE INSTANT--
--BACK TO FORM THE NEXT.
SHRED.
FORM.
SHRED...FORM... SHRED!
I'M TOLD IT'S QUITE PAINFUL.

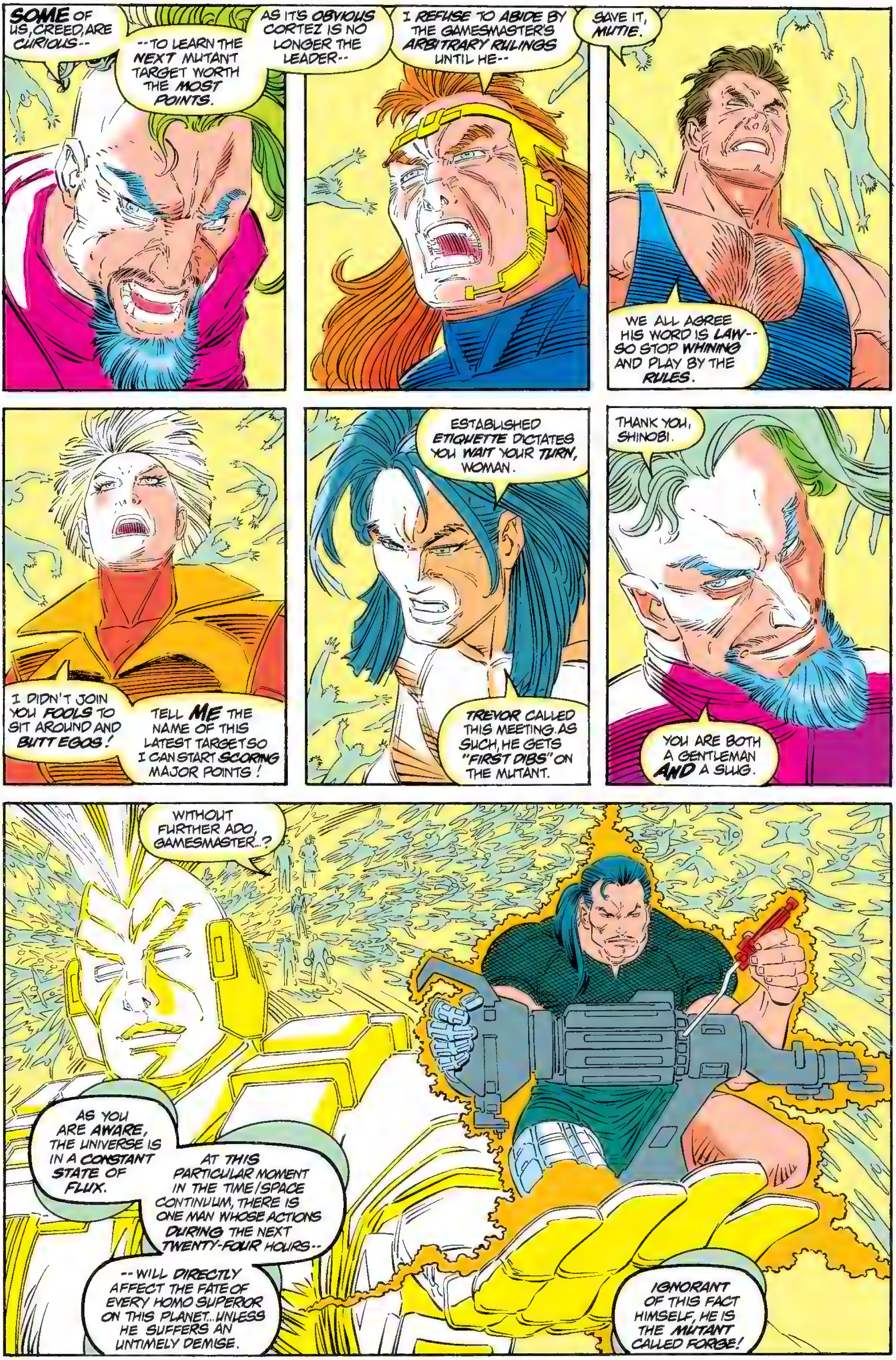

I'D FORGOTTEN WE PICKED UP THIS PARTICULAR DEVICE ON OUR ONE WAY TREK THROUGH TIME, BANTAM.
THAT'S WHY YOU NEED--ER, TOLERATE--ME, LORD FITZROY...
...BECAUSE ONLY I CAN CATALOGUE THE COUNTLESS TEMPORAL-PORTALS YOU HAVE IN STASIS.
BY THE GODS OF EBON, FITZROY--
--THE MOMENT I'M FREE, I WILL
I'M AFRAID YOU'LL EXPIRE LONG BEFORE YOU'RE FREE, SELENE. THE BLACK QUEEN GONE THE WAY OF THE REST OF THE HELLFIRE CLUB'S INNER CIRCLE.
TRUTH? THE ONLY REASON YOU'RE STILL ALIVE, IS BECAUSE I NEED YOUR PAIN AND SUFFERING--
--YOUR HONEST REACTION TO THIS UNIQUE FORM OF TORTURE--
--TO GET THE ATTENTION OF THE GAMESMASTER.

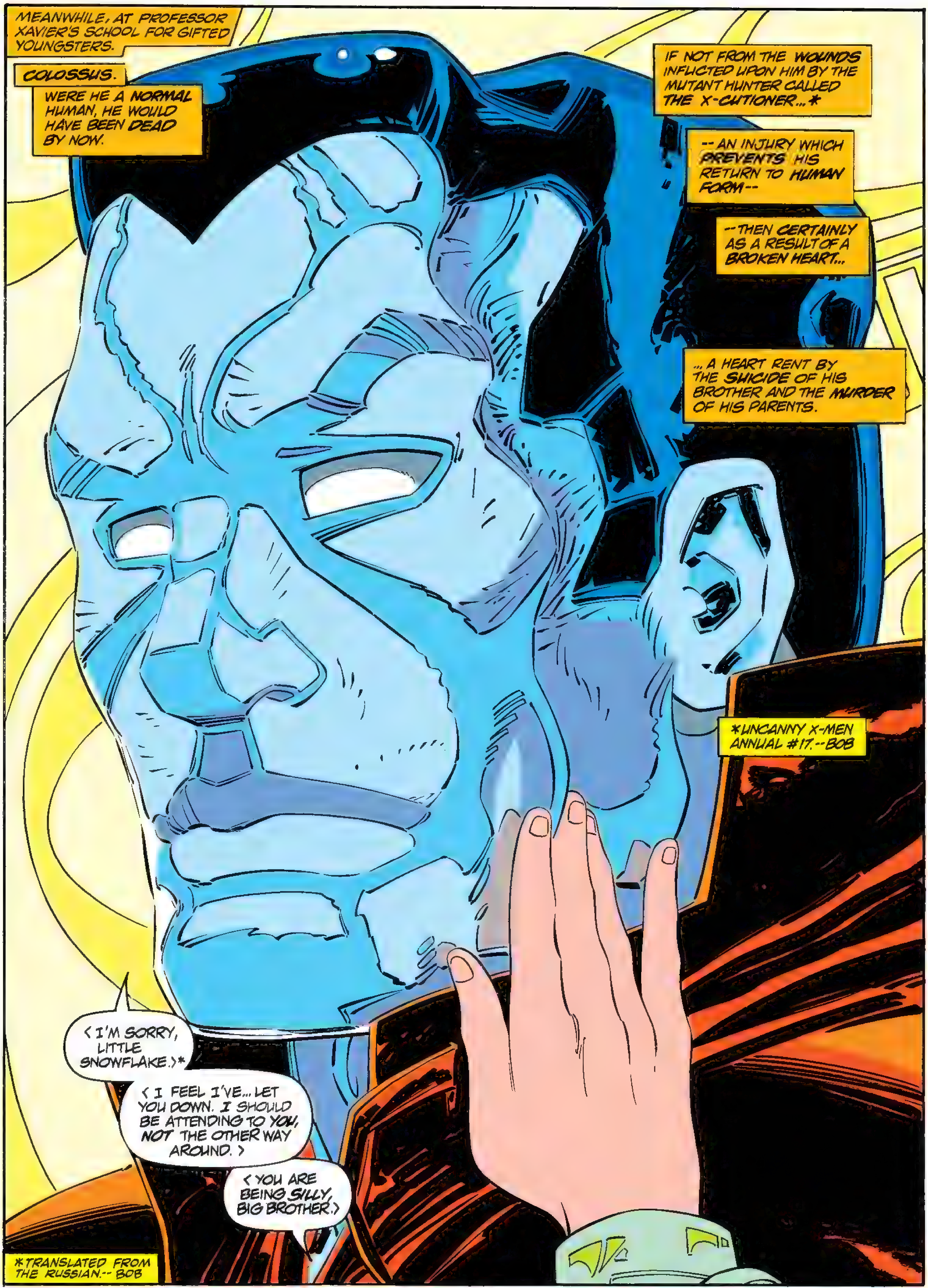

SINCE I AM NOT THE LEADER OF THE UPSTARTS--
--NOT YET ANYWAY--
--I'M FORCED TO BE MORE CREATIVE IN HOW I PETITION THE MAN FOR AN AUDIENCE.


UNGRATEFUL CUR! I CREATED THE UPSTARTS--
--HOPING COMPETITION WOULD FORGE YOU SPOILED BRATS
INTO THE NEXT GENERATION OF MUTANT LEADERS!

AND DON'T THINK WE DON'T APPRECIATE IT, "YOUR MAJESTY."
GAMESMASTER! MAY I ASSUME BY YOUR ASTRAL PROJECTION--
--YOU'VE AGREED TO MY REQUEST FOR A MEETING OF ALL THE UPSTARTS?
YES. IF FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN YOUR MACHINATIONS--
--HAVE PROVIDED A MOMENTARY RESPITE FROM MY... CONDITION.
WITHOUT ANOTHER WORD, GAMESMASTER SHOWS HIS APPRECIATION...
--BY RIPPING THE ESSENCE FROM LORD TREVOR FITZROY'S MUTANT BODY.
MASTER?!
PSST. HEY?
IS HE... DEAD?
NO SUCH LUCK.
HIS BODY IS INTACT. HIS MIND...


"... IS SOMEPLACE ELSE."
THAT "SOMEPLACE" IS--AS SPECIFICALLY AS POSSIBLE--THE MIND OF THE YOUNG MUTANT KNOWN ONLY AS THE GAMESMASTER.
AN OMNIPATH, HE HAS, FOR SOME TIME NOW, FOUND HIMSELF IN ALMOST CONSTANT CONTACT WITH NEARLY EVERY SENTIENT MIND ON THE PLANET...
... LOVES, HATES, DESIRES FLOAT UNBIDDEN THROUGH HIS MIND LIKE FADED MEMORIES...
... AND THE DIVERSITY OF EMOTION WOULD DRIVE HIM MAD, IF NOT FOR THE BLESSED RELEASE OF THE GAME... THE UPSTARTS.
MY APOLOGIES FOR TAKING YOU ALL AWAY FROM WHATEVER YOU WERE DOING, BUT ONE OF YOUR OWN HAS REQUESTED A MEETING.
FOR THE BENEFIT OF MS. BLAZE, I BELIEVE INTRODUCTIONS ARE IN ORDER. YOU ALL RECOGNIZE YOUNG FITZROY, OF COURSE.
OUR TERRORIST FROM TOMORROW HAS EARNED QUITE A NUMBER OF POINTS WITH THE SLAUGHTER OF DONALD PIERCE, THE REAVERS, AND A HANDFUL OF HELLIONS.
YOU FORGOT TO MENTION EMMA FROST.
THE WHITE QUEEN IS STILL IN A COMA. DON'T GET GREEDY, TREVOR.
SHINOBI SHAW WAS TOO LAZY TO HUNT DOWN AND KILL MUTANTS. HE SETTLED FOR SLAYING HIS OWN FATHER... THE BLACK KING, SEBASTIAN.
IS THIS GOING TO TAKE LONG?
SIENA BLAZE-- HER FIRST SHOT OUT OF THE GATE, AND SHE TRIED TO KILL ALL THREE LEADERS OF THE X-MEN.*
I AWARDED HER POINTS SIMPLY FOR CHUTZPAH!
NO ONE EVER ACCUSED ME OF THINKING SMALL.
AND THE HERETOFORE UNDISPUTED FORERUNNER OF THE UPSTARTS, FABIAN CORTEZ.
WHILE THE MAJORITY OF HIS POINTS ARE CURRENTLY... IN "ARBITRATION"... HE'S CERTAINLY NOT LACKING FOR A POWER BASE AS FOUNDER OF MAGNETO'S DISCIPLES--THE ACOLYTES.
A CONGREGATION I SHOULD BE GETTING BACK TO, EVEN AS WE
FINALLY, GRAYDON CREED. THOUGH HUMAN, HIS "HERITAGE" IS CAUSE ENOUGH TO EXPLAIN HIS DESIRE TO RULE MUTANTS.
WHILE HE HAS YET TO KILL A SINGLE MUTANT, HE INTENDS TO MAKE UP FOR IN QUANTITY... WHAT HE LACKS IN QUALITY.
IF YOU'RE DONE, GAMESMASTER--WE ALL HAVE THINGS WE COULD BE GETTING BACK TO.
*X-MEN UNLIMITED #1. --BH


SOME OF US, CREED, ARE CURIOUS--
--TO LEARN THE NEXT MUTANT TARGET WORTH THE MOST POINTS.
AS IT'S OBVIOUS CORTEZ IS NO LONGER THE LEADER--
I REFUSE TO ABIDE BY THE GAMESMASTER'S ARBITRARY RULINGS UNTIL HE--
SAVE IT, MUTIE.
WE ALL AGREE HIS WORD IS LAW-- SO STOP WHINING AND PLAY BY THE RULES.
I DIDN'T JOIN YOU FOOLS TO SIT AROUND AND BUTT EGOS!
TELL ME THE NAME OF THIS LATEST TARGET SO I CAN START SCORING MAJOR POINTS!
ESTABLISHED ETIQUETTE DICTATES YOU WAIT YOUR TURN, WOMAN.
TREVOR CALLED THIS MEETING. AS SUCH, HE GETS "FIRST DIBS" ON THE MUTANT.
THANK YOU, SHINOBI.
YOU ARE BOTH A GENTLEMAN AND A SLUG.
WITHOUT FURTHER ADO, GAMESMASTER...?
AS YOU ARE AWARE, THE UNIVERSE IS IN A CONSTANT STATE OF FLUX.
AT THIS PARTICULAR MOMENT IN THE TIME/SPACE CONTINUUM, THERE IS ONE MAN WHOSE ACTIONS DURING THE NEXT TWENTY-FOUR HOURS--
--WILL DIRECTLY AFFECT THE FATE OF EVERY HOMO SUPERIOR ON THIS PLANET... UNLESS HE SUFFERS AN UNTIMELY DEMISE.
IGNORANT OF THIS FACT HIMSELF, HE IS THE MUTANT CALLED FORGE!


MEANWHILE, AT PROFESSOR XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS.
COLOSSUS.
WERE HE A NORMAL HUMAN, HE WOULD HAVE BEEN DEAD BY NOW.
IF NOT FROM THE WOUNDS INFLICTED UPON HIM BY THE MUTANT HUNTER CALLED THE X-CUTIONER...*
--AN INJURY WHICH PREVENTS HIS RETURN TO HUMAN FORM--
--THEN CERTAINLY AS A RESULT OF A BROKEN HEART...
...A HEART RENT BY THE SUICIDE OF HIS BROTHER AND THE MURDER OF HIS PARENTS.
*UNCANNY X-MEN ANNUAL #17.--BOB
‹I'M SORRY, LITTLE SNOWFLAKE.›*
‹I FEEL I'VE... LET YOU DOWN. I SHOULD BE ATTENDING TO YOU, NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND.›
‹YOU ARE BEING SILLY, BIG BROTHER.›
*TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN.-- BOB

STAN LEE PRESENTS THE UNCANNY *X-MEN* IN

DOMINION!

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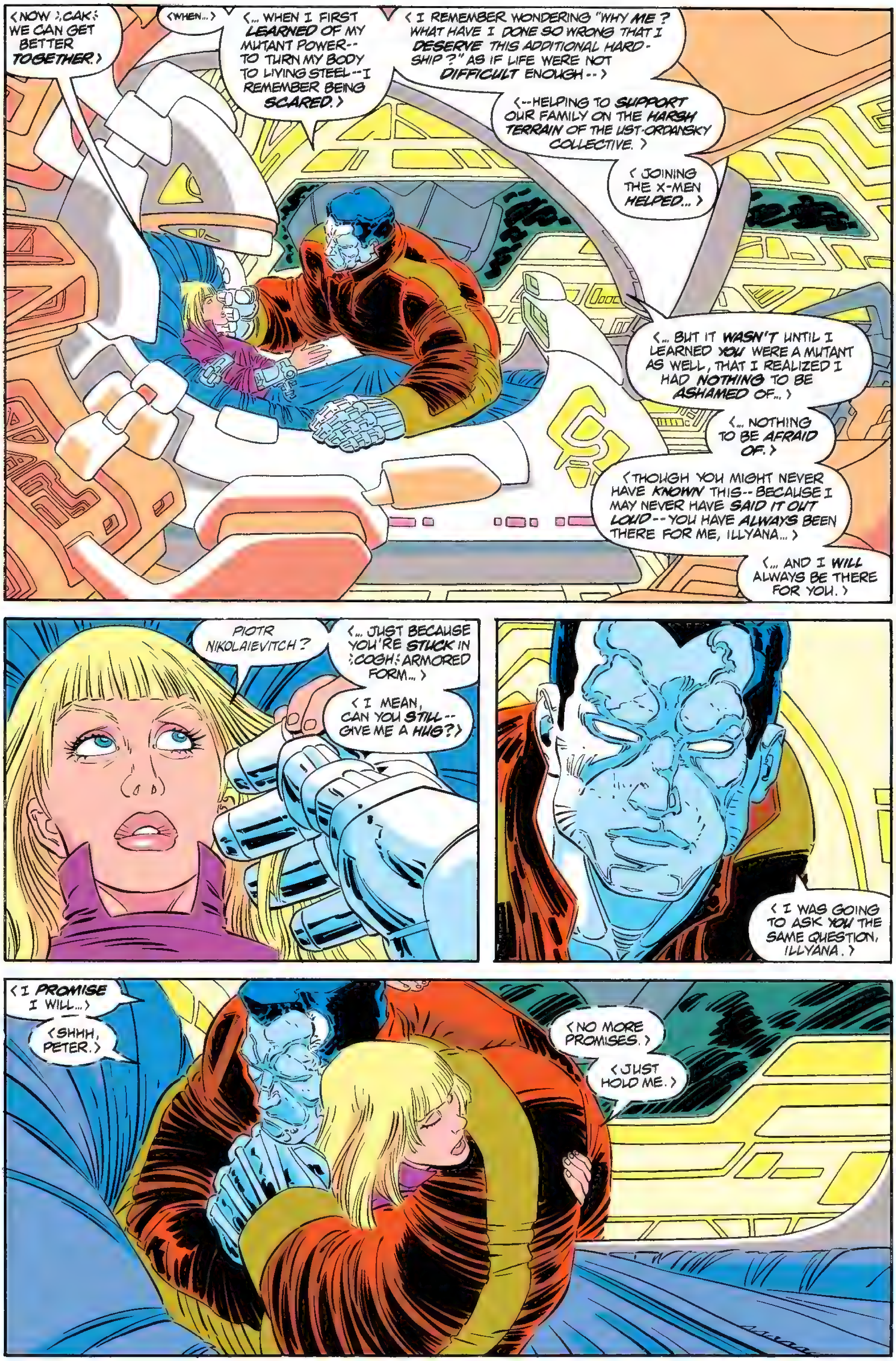
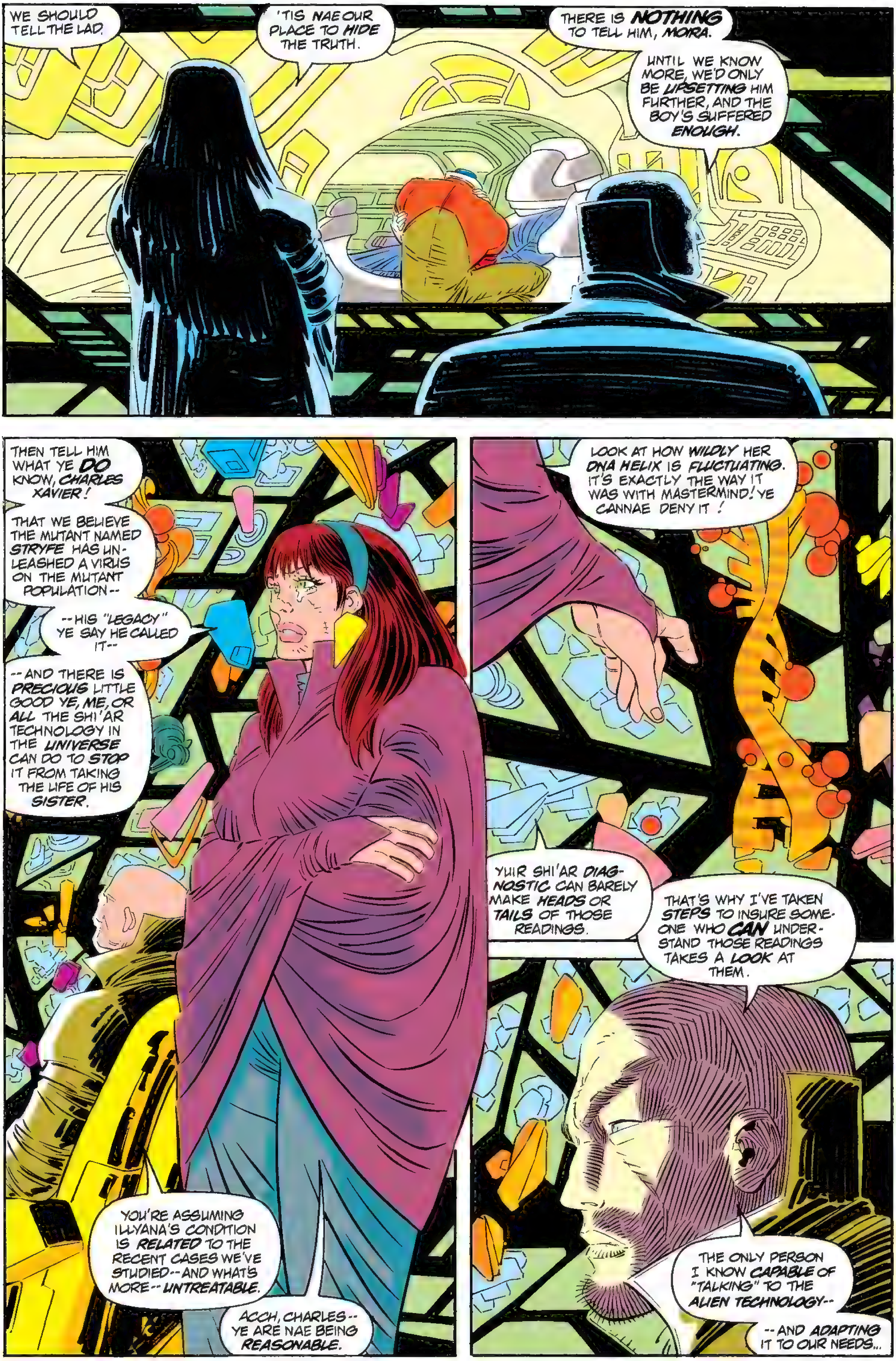
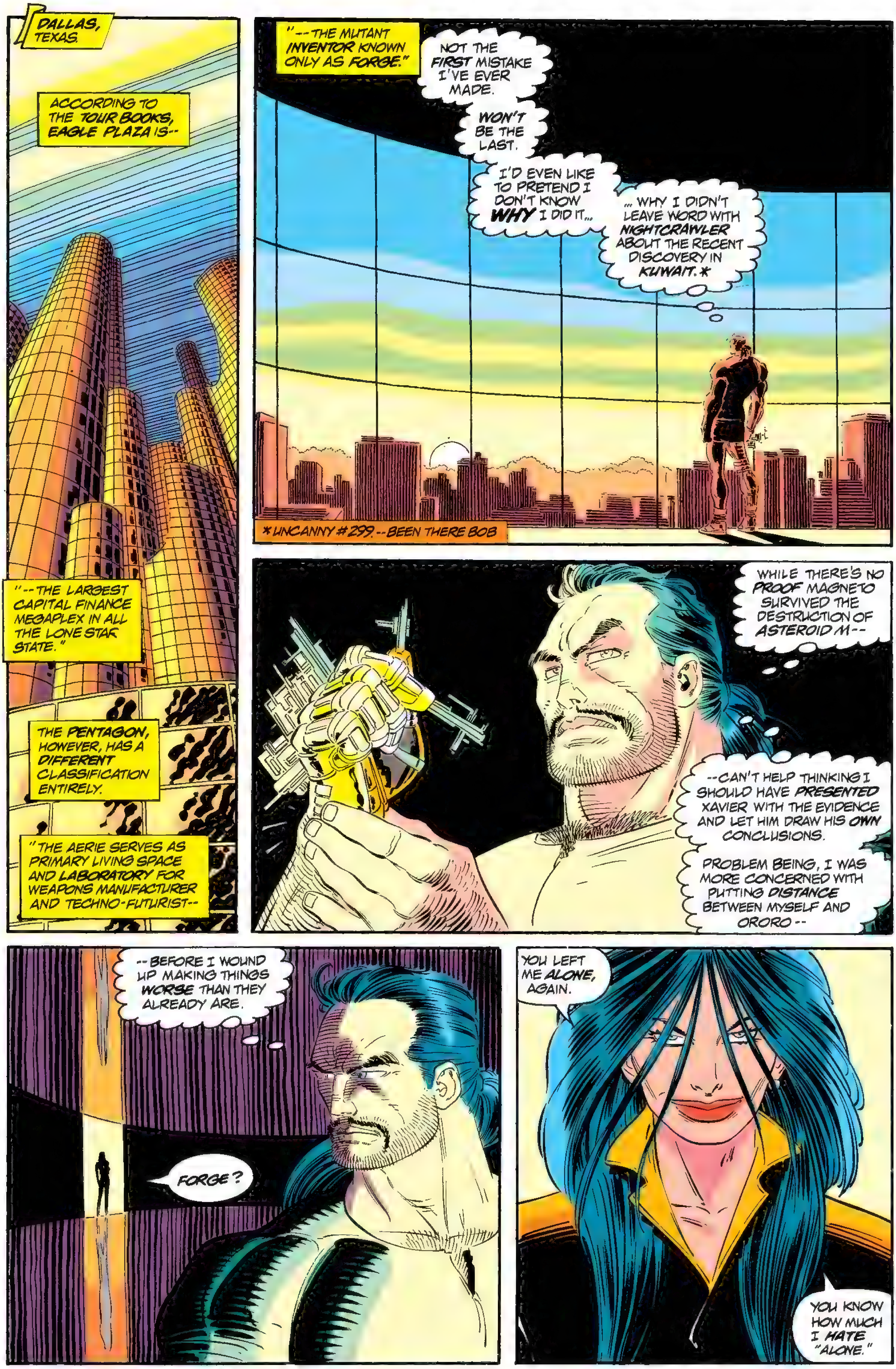
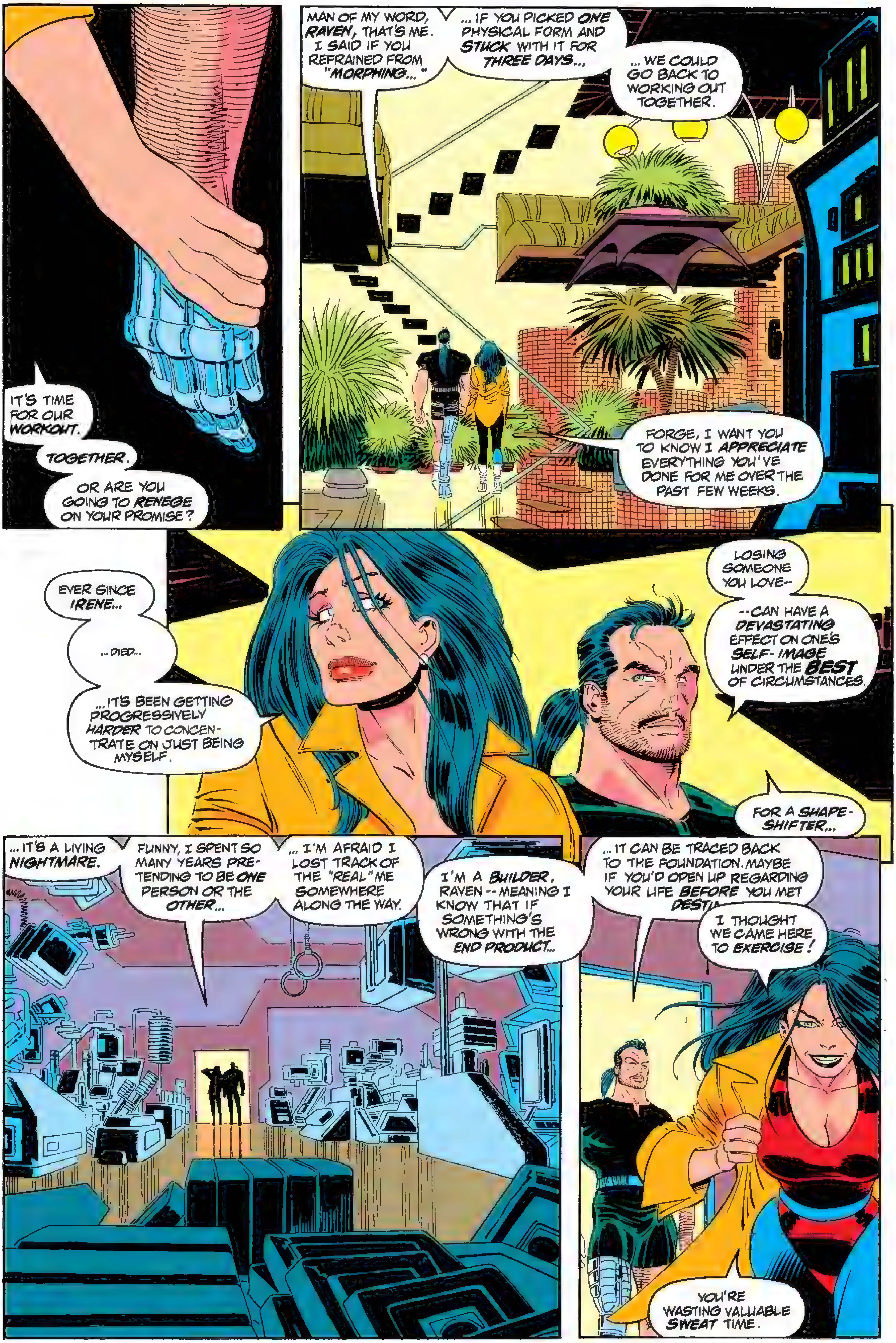
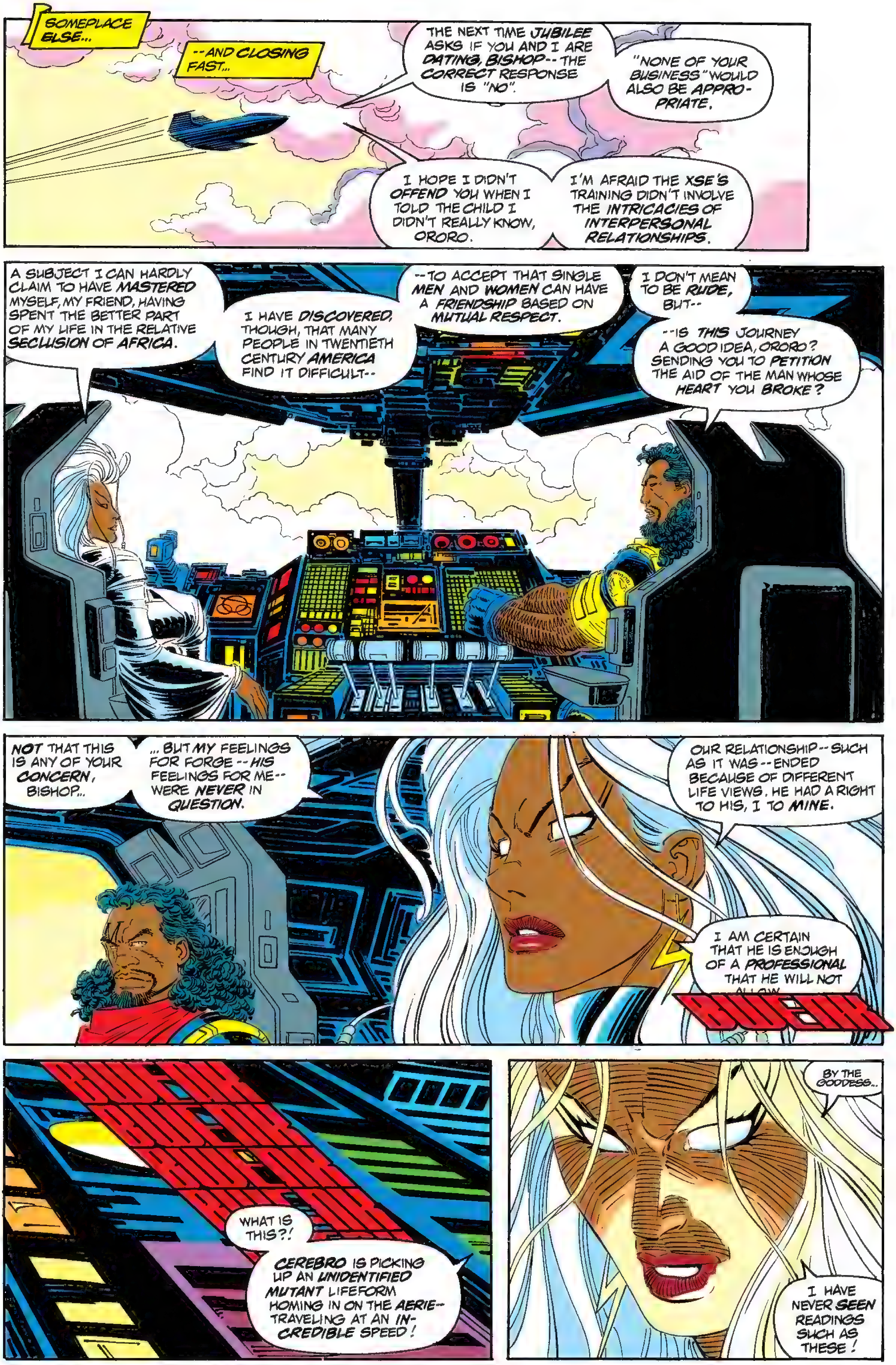
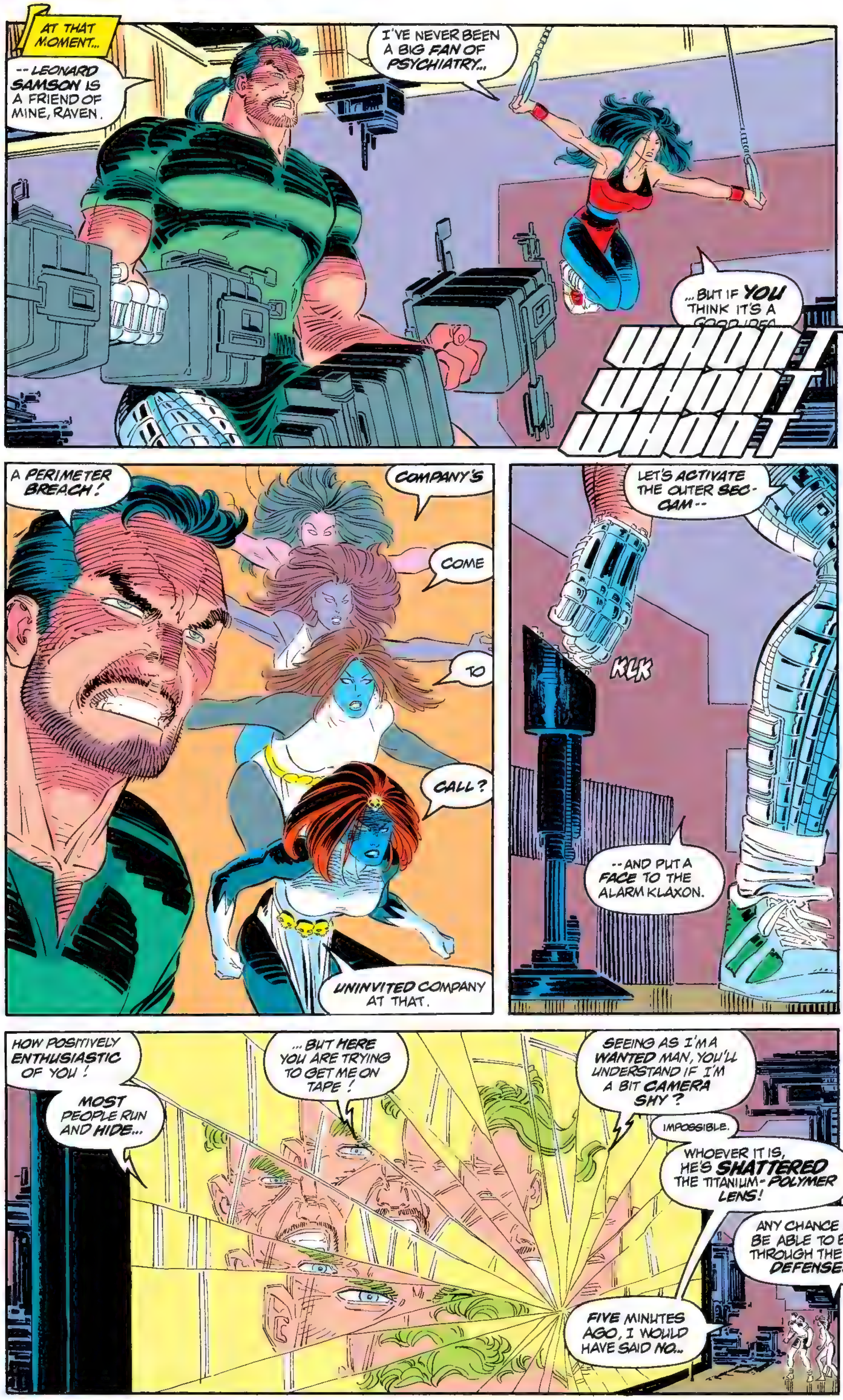

<NOW :CAK: WE CAN GET BETTER TOGETHER.>
<WHEN...>
<... WHEN I FIRST LEARNED OF MY MUTANT POWER-- TO TURN MY BODY TO LIVING STEEL--I REMEMBER BEING SCARED.>
< I REMEMBER WONDERING "WHY ME ? WHAT HAVE I DONE SO WRONG THAT I DESERVE THIS ADDITIONAL HARDSHIP ?" AS IF LIFE WERE NOT DIFFICULT ENOUGH -- >
<--HELPING TO SUPPORT OUR FAMILY ON THE HARSH TERRAIN OF THE UST-ORDANSKY COLLECTIVE. >
< JOINING THE X-MEN HELPED... >
<... BUT IT WASN'T UNTIL I LEARNED YOU WERE A MUTANT AS WELL, THAT I REALIZED I HAD NOTHING TO BE ASHAMED OF... >
<... NOTHING TO BE AFRAID OF. >
<THOUGH YOU MIGHT NEVER HAVE KNOWN THIS--BECAUSE I MAY NEVER HAVE SAID IT OUT LOUD--YOU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN THERE FOR ME, ILLYANA... >
<... AND I WILL ALWAYS BE THERE FOR YOU. >
PIOTR NIKOLAIEVITCH?
<... JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE STUCK IN :COGH: ARMORED FORM... >
< I MEAN, CAN YOU STILL-- GIVE ME A HUG?>
< I WAS GOING TO ASK YOU THE SAME QUESTION, ILLYANA. >
< I PROMISE I WILL... >
< SHHH, PETER. >
< NO MORE PROMISES. >
< JUST HOLD ME. >

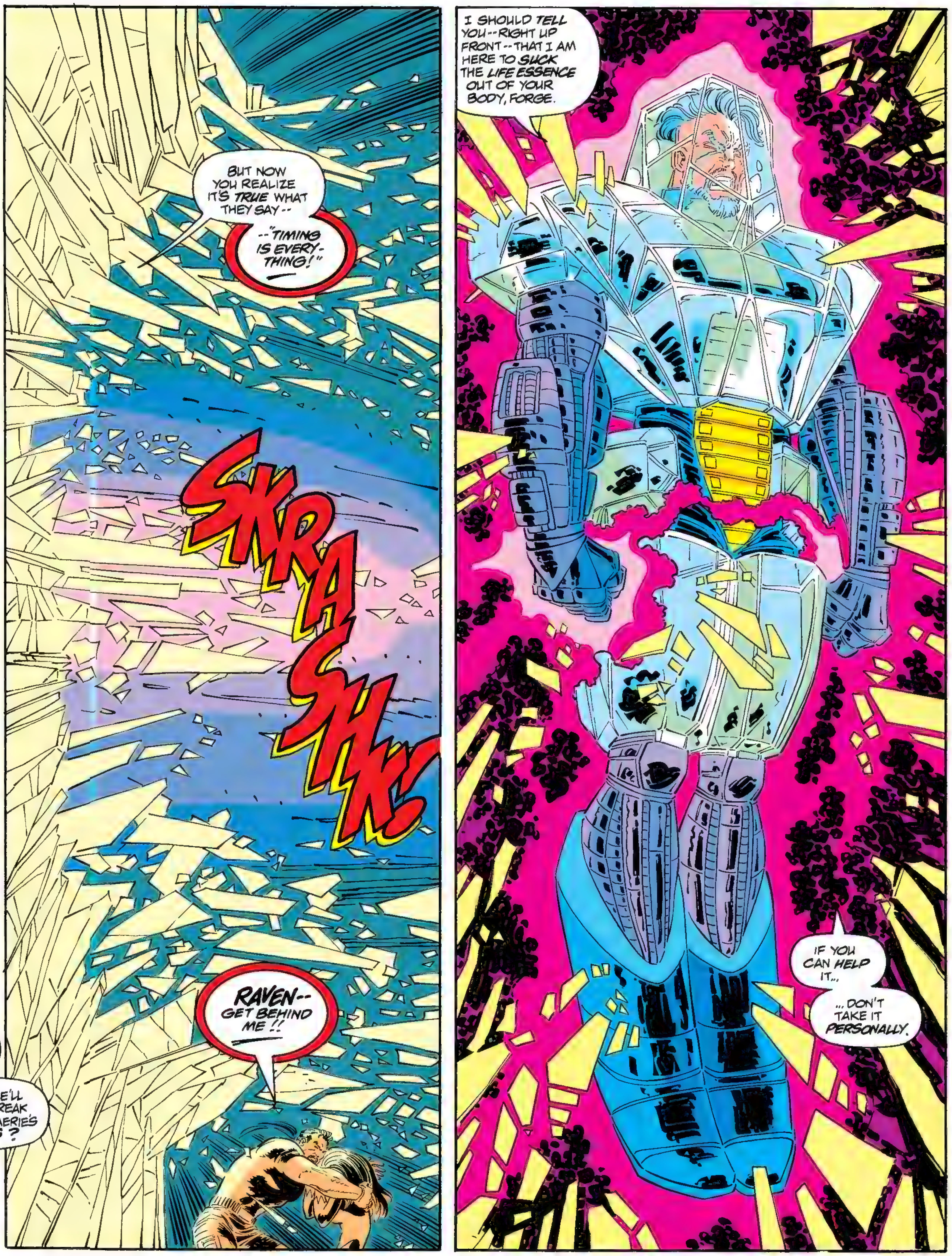

WE SHOULD TELL THE LAD.
'TIS NAE OUR PLACE TO HIDE THE TRUTH.
THERE IS NOTHING TO TELL HIM, MOIRA.
UNTIL WE KNOW MORE, WE'D ONLY BE UPSETTING HIM FURTHER, AND THE BOY'S SUFFERED ENOUGH.
THEN TELL HIM WHAT YE DO KNOW, CHARLES XAVIER!
THAT WE BELIEVE THE MUTANT NAMED STRYFE HAS UNLEASHED A VIRUS ON THE MUTANT POPULATION--
--HIS "LEGACY" YE SAY HE CALLED IT--
--AND THERE IS PRECIOUS LITTLE GOOD YE, ME, OR ALL THE SHI'AR TECHNOLOGY IN THE UNIVERSE CAN DO TO STOP IT FROM TAKING THE LIFE OF HIS SISTER.
YOU'RE ASSUMING ILLYANA'S CONDITION IS RELATED TO THE RECENT CASES WE'VE STUDIED--AND WHAT'S MORE--UNTREATABLE.
ACCH, CHARLES--YE ARE NAE BEING REASONABLE.
LOOK AT HOW WILDLY HER DNA HELIX IS FLUCTUATING. IT'S EXACTLY THE WAY IT WAS WITH MASTERMIND! YE CANNAE DENY IT!
YUIR SHI'AR DIAGNOSTIC CAN BARELY MAKE HEADS OR TAILS OF THOSE READINGS.
THAT'S WHY I'VE TAKEN STEPS TO INSURE SOMEONE WHO CAN UNDERSTAND THOSE READINGS TAKES A LOOK AT THEM.
THE ONLY PERSON I KNOW CAPABLE OF "TALKING" TO THE ALIEN TECHNOLOGY--
--AND ADAPTING IT TO OUR NEEDS...

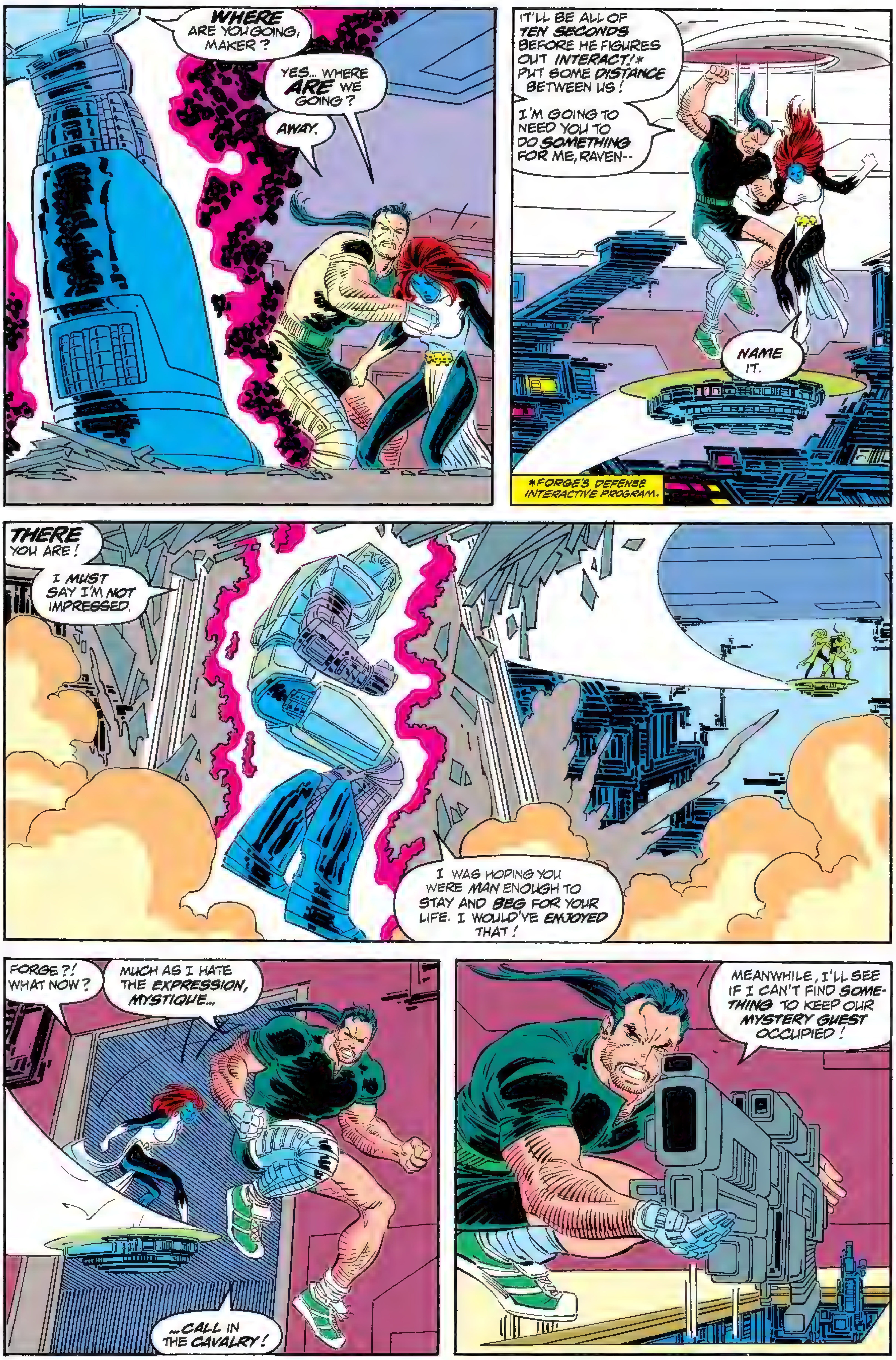

DALLAS, TEXAS.
ACCORDING TO THE TOUR BOOKS, EAGLE PLAZA IS--
"--THE LARGEST CAPITAL FINANCE MEGAPLEX IN ALL THE LONE STAR STATE."
THE PENTAGON, HOWEVER, HAS A DIFFERENT CLASSIFICATION ENTIRELY.
"THE AERIE SERVES AS PRIMARY LIVING SPACE AND LABORATORY FOR WEAPONS MANUFACTURER AND TECHNO-FUTURIST--
"--THE MUTANT INVENTOR KNOWN ONLY AS FORGE."
NOT THE FIRST MISTAKE I'VE EVER MADE.
WON'T BE THE LAST.
I'D EVEN LIKE TO PRETEND I DON'T KNOW WHY I DID IT...
...WHY I DIDN'T LEAVE WORD WITH NIGHTCRAWLER ABOUT THE RECENT DISCOVERY IN KUWAIT.*
*UNCANNY #299--BEEN THERE BOB
WHILE THERE'S NO PROOF MAGNETO SURVIVED THE DESTRUCTION OF ASTEROID M--
--CAN'T HELP THINKING I SHOULD HAVE PRESENTED XAVIER WITH THE EVIDENCE AND LET HIM DRAW HIS OWN CONCLUSIONS.
PROBLEM BEING, I WAS MORE CONCERNED WITH PUTTING DISTANCE BETWEEN MYSELF AND ORORO--
--BEFORE I WOUND UP MAKING THINGS WORSE THAN THEY ALREADY ARE.
FORGE?
YOU LEFT ME ALONE, AGAIN.
YOU KNOW HOW MUCH I HATE "ALONE."

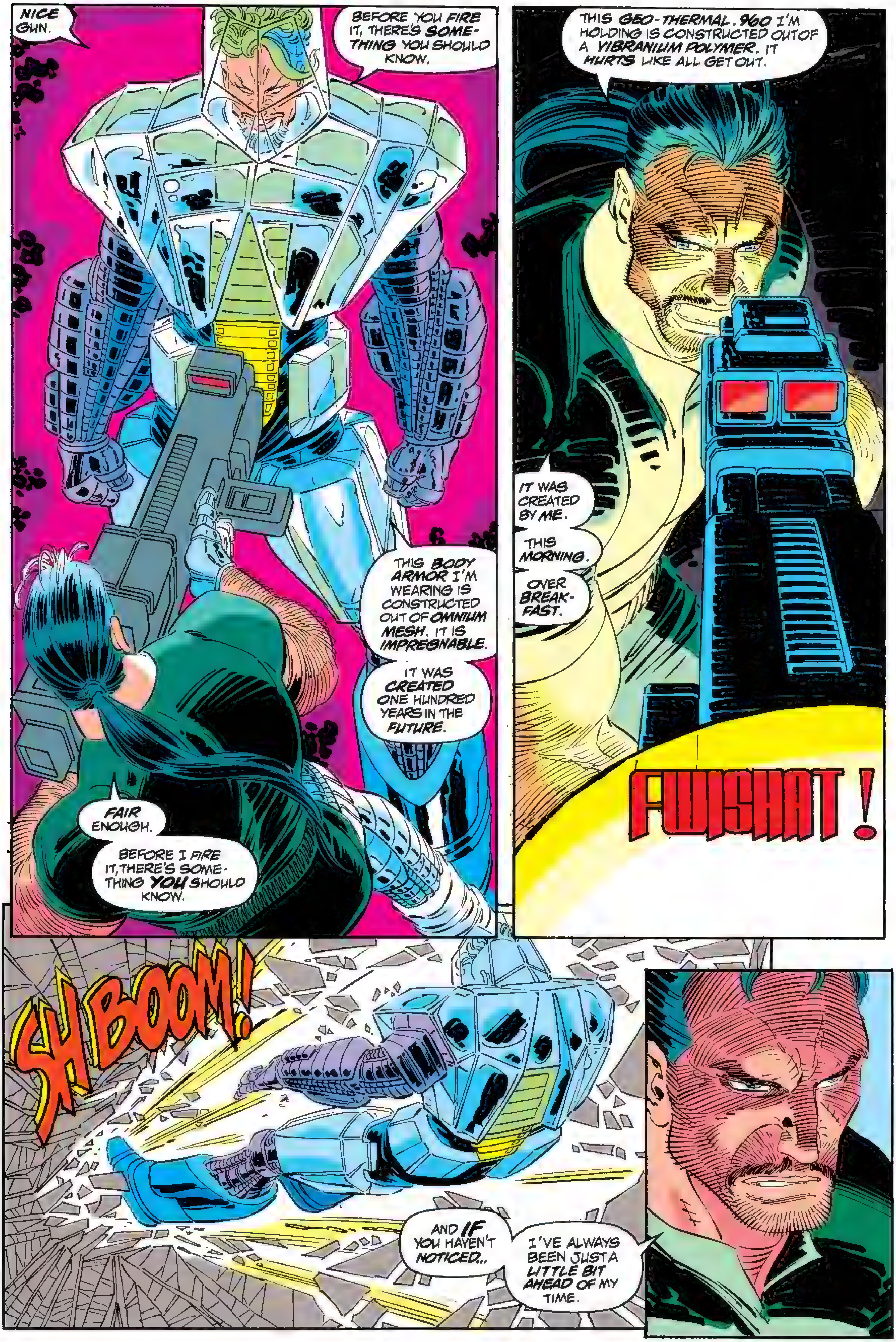

IT'S TIME FOR OUR WORKOUT.
TOGETHER.
OR ARE YOU GOING TO RENEGE ON YOUR PROMISE?
MAN OF MY WORD, RAVEN, THAT'S ME. I SAID IF YOU REFRAINED FROM "MORPHING..."
...IF YOU PICKED ONE PHYSICAL FORM AND STUCK WITH IT FOR THREE DAYS...
...WE COULD GO BACK TO WORKING OUT TOGETHER.
FORGE, I WANT YOU TO KNOW I APPRECIATE EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE FOR ME OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS.
EVER SINCE IRENE...
...DIED...
...IT'S BEEN GETTING PROGRESSIVELY HARDER TO CONCENTRATE ON JUST BEING MYSELF.
LOSING SOMEONE YOU LOVE--
--CAN HAVE A DEVASTATING EFFECT ON ONE'S SELF-IMAGE UNDER THE BEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES.
FOR A SHAPE-SHIFTER...
...IT'S A LIVING NIGHTMARE.
FUNNY, I SPENT SO MANY YEARS PRETENDING TO BE ONE PERSON OR THE OTHER...
...I'M AFRAID I LOST TRACK OF THE "REAL" ME SOMEWHERE ALONG THE WAY.
I'M A BUILDER, RAVEN -- MEANING I KNOW THAT IF SOMETHING'S WRONG WITH THE END PRODUCT...
...IT CAN BE TRACED BACK TO THE FOUNDATION. MAYBE IF YOU'D OPEN UP REGARDING YOUR LIFE BEFORE YOU MET DESTI
I THOUGHT WE CAME HERE TO EXERCISE!
YOU'RE WASTING VALUABLE SWEAT TIME.

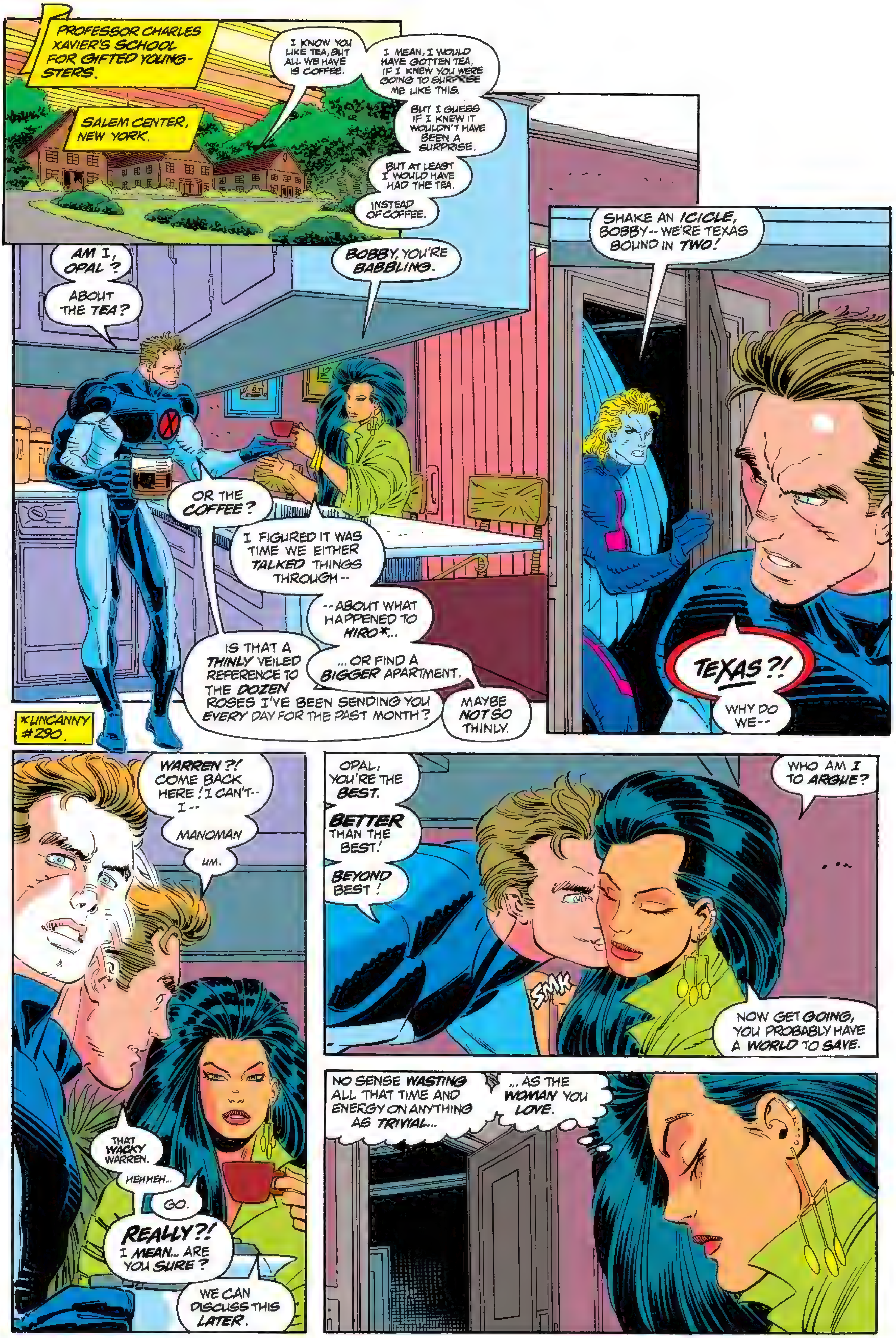

SOMEPLACE ELSE...
--AND CLOSING FAST...
THE NEXT TIME JUBILEE ASKS IF YOU AND I ARE DATING, BISHOP-- THE CORRECT RESPONSE IS "NO".
"NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS" WOULD ALSO BE APPROPRIATE.
I HOPE I DIDN'T OFFEND YOU WHEN I TOLD THE CHILD I DIDN'T REALLY KNOW, ORORO.
I'M AFRAID THE XSE'S TRAINING DIDN'T INVOLVE THE INTRICACIES OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS.
A SUBJECT I CAN HARDLY CLAIM TO HAVE MASTERED MYSELF, MY FRIEND, HAVING SPENT THE BETTER PART OF MY LIFE IN THE RELATIVE SECLUSION OF AFRICA.
I HAVE DISCOVERED, THOUGH, THAT MANY PEOPLE IN TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICA FIND IT DIFFICULT--
--TO ACCEPT THAT SINGLE MEN AND WOMEN CAN HAVE A FRIENDSHIP BASED ON MUTUAL RESPECT.
I DON'T MEAN TO BE RUDE, BUT--
--IS THIS JOURNEY A GOOD IDEA, ORORO? SENDING YOU TO PETITION THE AID OF THE MAN WHOSE HEART YOU BROKE?
NOT THAT THIS IS ANY OF YOUR CONCERN, BISHOP...
...BUT MY FEELINGS FOR FORGE-- HIS FEELINGS FOR ME-- WERE NEVER IN QUESTION.
OUR RELATIONSHIP-- SUCH AS IT WAS-- ENDED BECAUSE OF DIFFERENT LIFE VIEWS. HE HAD A RIGHT TO HIS, I TO MINE.
I AM CERTAIN THAT HE IS ENOUGH OF A PROFESSIONAL THAT HE WILL NOT ALLOW
WHAT IS THIS?!
CEREBRO IS PICKING UP AN UNIDENTIFIED MUTANT LIFEFORM HOMING IN ON THE AERIE-- TRAVELING AT AN INCREDIBLE SPEED!
BY THE GODDESS...
I HAVE NEVER SEEN READINGS SUCH AS THESE!


AT THAT MOMENT...
--LEONARD SAMSON IS A FRIEND OF MINE, RAVEN.
I'VE NEVER BEEN A BIG FAN OF PSYCHIATRY...
...BUT IF YOU THINK IT'S A GOOD IDEA
WHONT WHONT WHONT
A PERIMETER BREACH!
COMPANY'S
COME
TO
CALL?
UNINVITED COMPANY AT THAT.
LET'S ACTIVATE THE OUTER SEC-CAM--
KLK
--AND PUT A FACE TO THE ALARM KLAXON.
HOW POSITIVELY ENTHUSIASTIC OF YOU!
MOST PEOPLE RUN AND HIDE...
...BUT HERE YOU ARE TRYING TO GET ME ON TAPE!
SEEING AS I'M A WANTED MAN, YOU'LL UNDERSTAND IF I'M A BIT CAMERA SHY?
IMPOSSIBLE.
WHOEVER IT IS, HE'S SHATTERED THE TITANIUM-POLYMER LENS!
ANY CHANCE HE'LL BE ABLE TO BREAK THROUGH THE AERIES DEFENSES?
FIVE MINUTES AGO, I WOULD HAVE SAID NO...

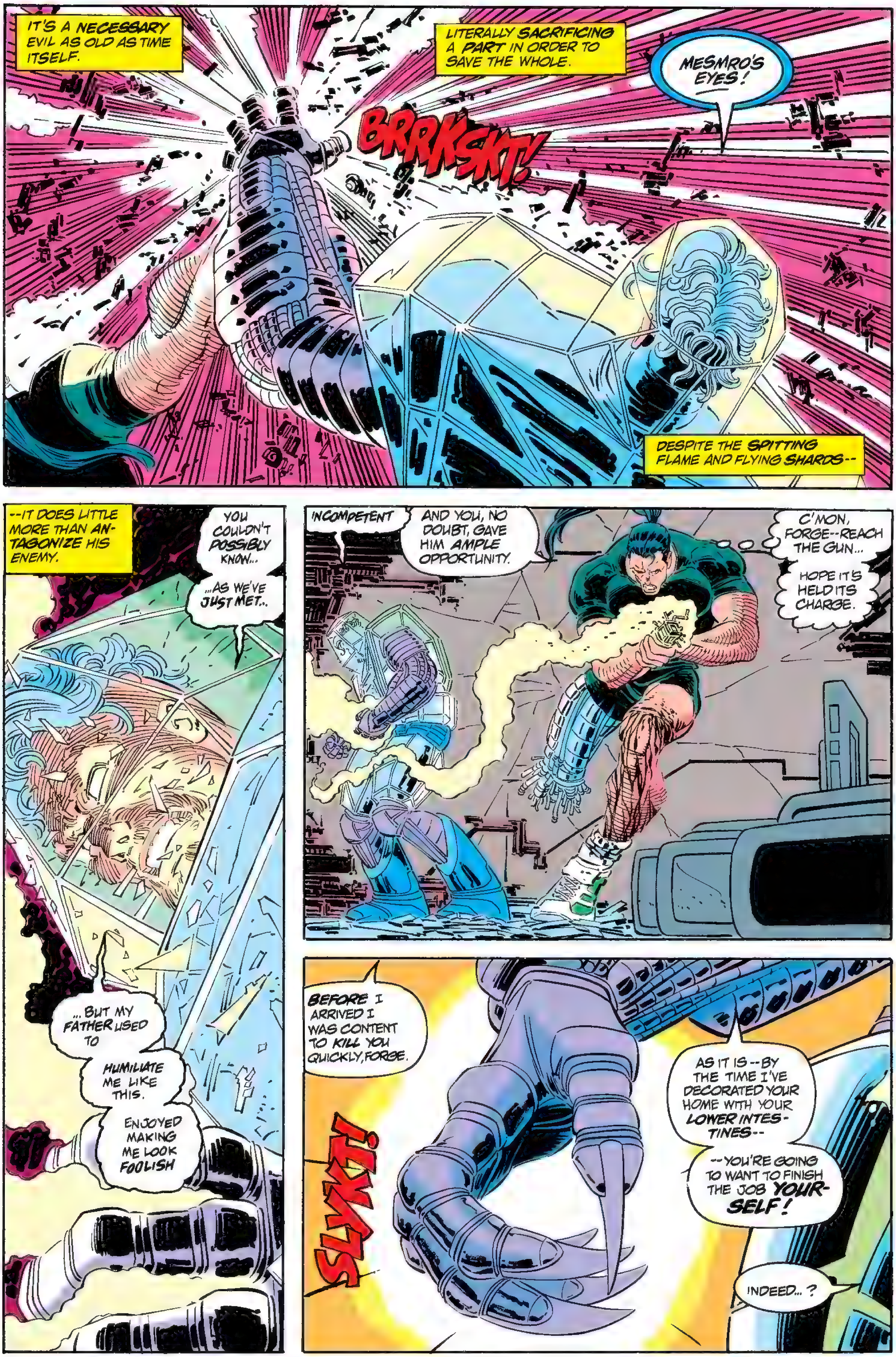

BUT NOW YOU REALIZE IT'S TRUE WHAT THEY SAY--
--"TIMING IS EVERY-THING!"
SKRASHK!
RAVEN--GET BEHIND ME!!
I SHOULD TELL YOU--RIGHT UP FRONT--THAT I AM HERE TO SUCK THE LIFE ESSENCE OUT OF YOUR BODY, FORGE.
IF YOU CAN HELP IT...
...DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY.

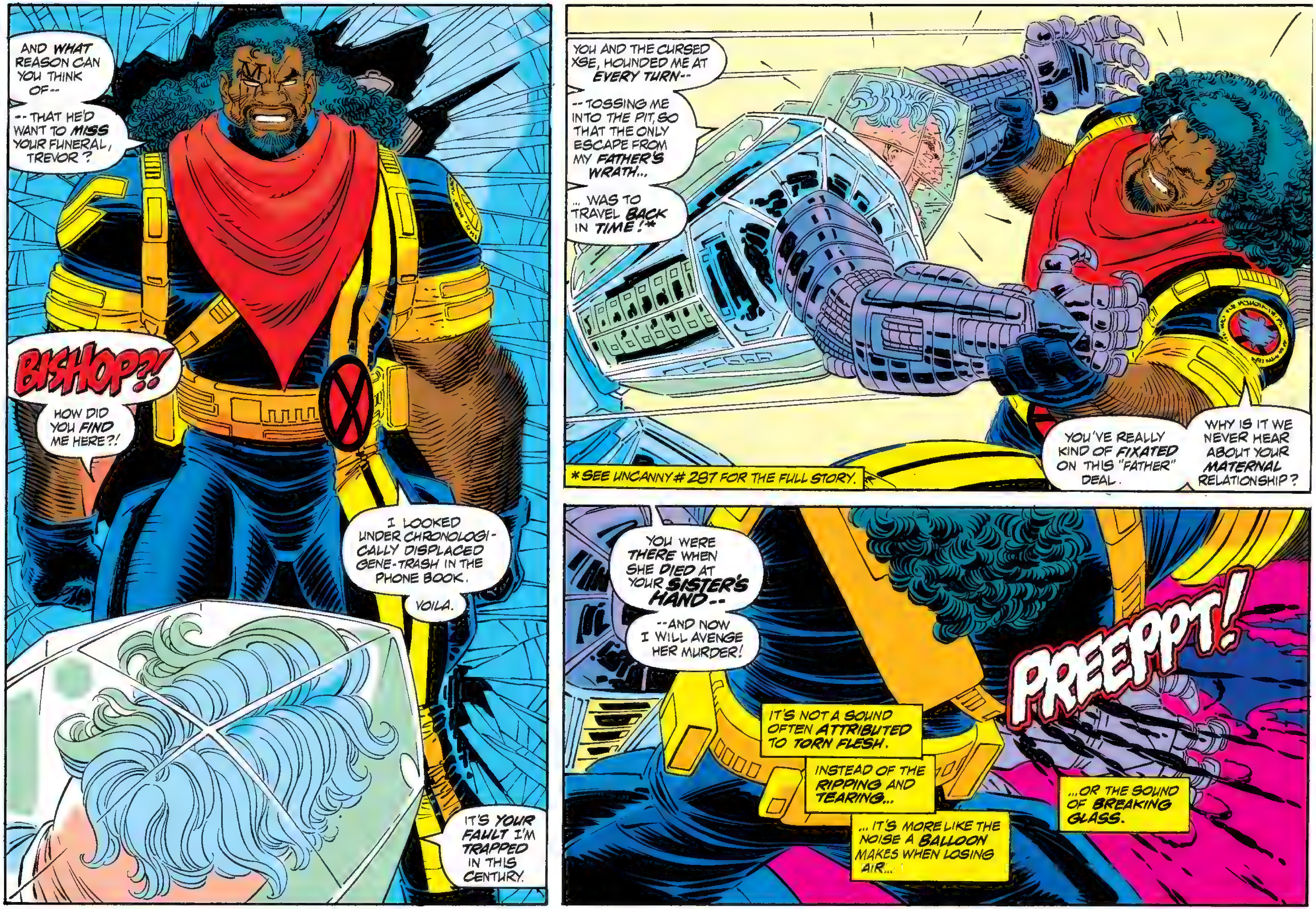

WHERE ARE YOU GOING, MAKER?
YES... WHERE ARE WE GOING?
AWAY.
IT'LL BE ALL OF TEN SECONDS BEFORE HE FIGURES OUT INTERACT!* PUT SOME DISTANCE BETWEEN US!
I'M GOING TO NEED YOU TO DO SOMETHING FOR ME, RAVEN--
NAME IT.
*FORGE'S DEFENSE INTERACTIVE PROGRAM.
THERE YOU ARE!
I MUST SAY I'M NOT IMPRESSED.
I WAS HOPING YOU WERE MAN ENOUGH TO STAY AND BEG FOR YOUR LIFE. I WOULD'VE ENJOYED THAT!
FORGE?! WHAT NOW?
MUCH AS I HATE THE EXPRESSION, MYSTIQUE...
...CALL IN THE CAVALRY!
MEANWHILE, I'LL SEE IF I CAN'T FIND SOMETHING TO KEEP OUR MYSTERY GUEST OCCUPIED!

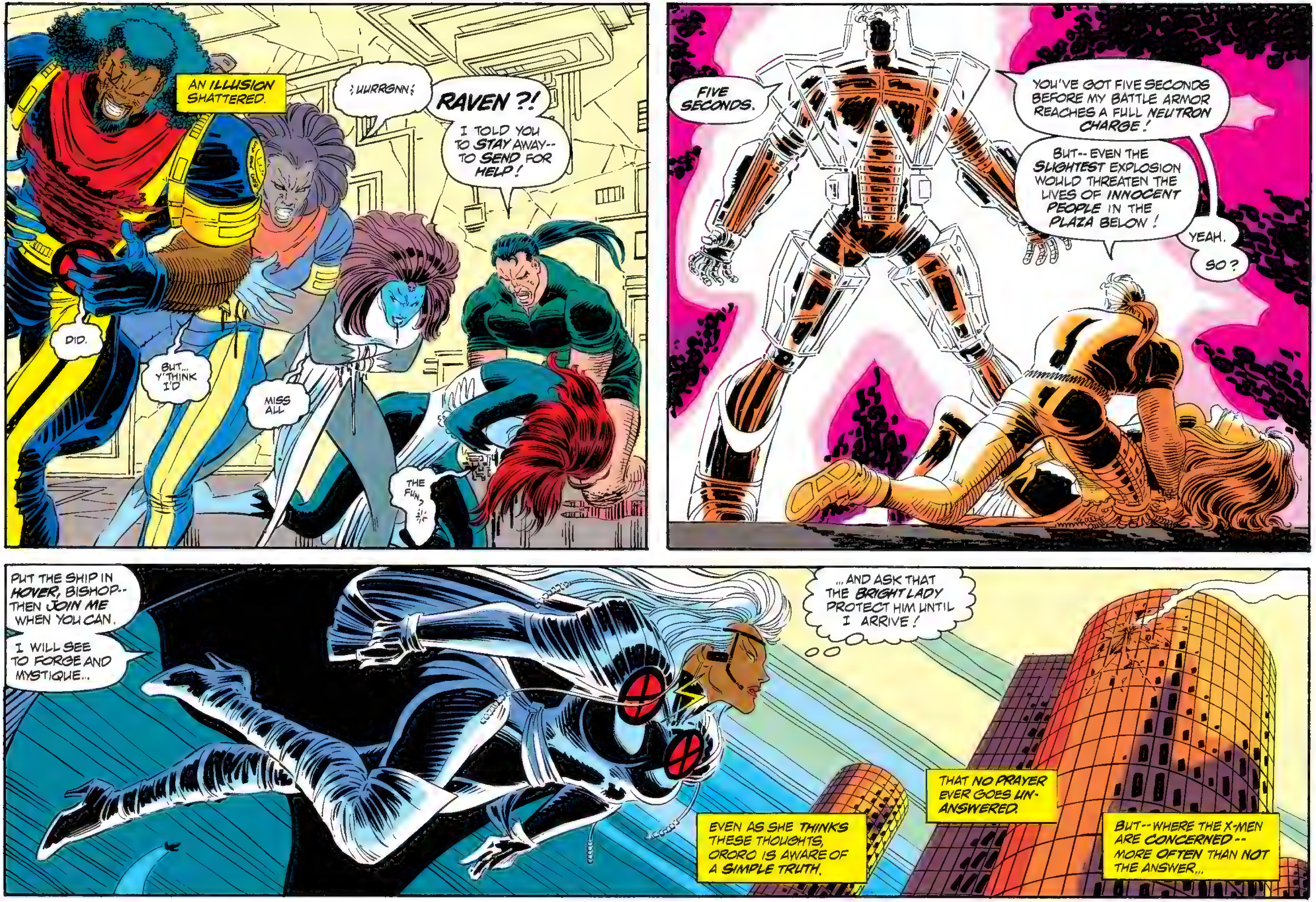

NICE GUN.
BEFORE YOU FIRE IT, THERE'S SOMETHING YOU SHOULD KNOW.
THIS BODY ARMOR I'M WEARING IS CONSTRUCTED OUT OF OMNIUM MESH. IT IS IMPREGNABLE.
IT WAS CREATED ONE HUNDRED YEARS IN THE FUTURE.
FAIR ENOUGH.
BEFORE I FIRE IT, THERE'S SOMETHING YOU SHOULD KNOW.
THIS GEO-THERMAL .960 I'M HOLDING IS CONSTRUCTED OUT OF A VIBRANIUM POLYMER. IT HURTS LIKE ALL GET OUT.
IT WAS CREATED BY ME.
THIS MORNING.
OVER BREAKFAST.
FWISHAT!
SHBOOM!
AND IF YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED...
I'VE ALWAYS BEEN JUST A LITTLE BIT AHEAD OF MY TIME.

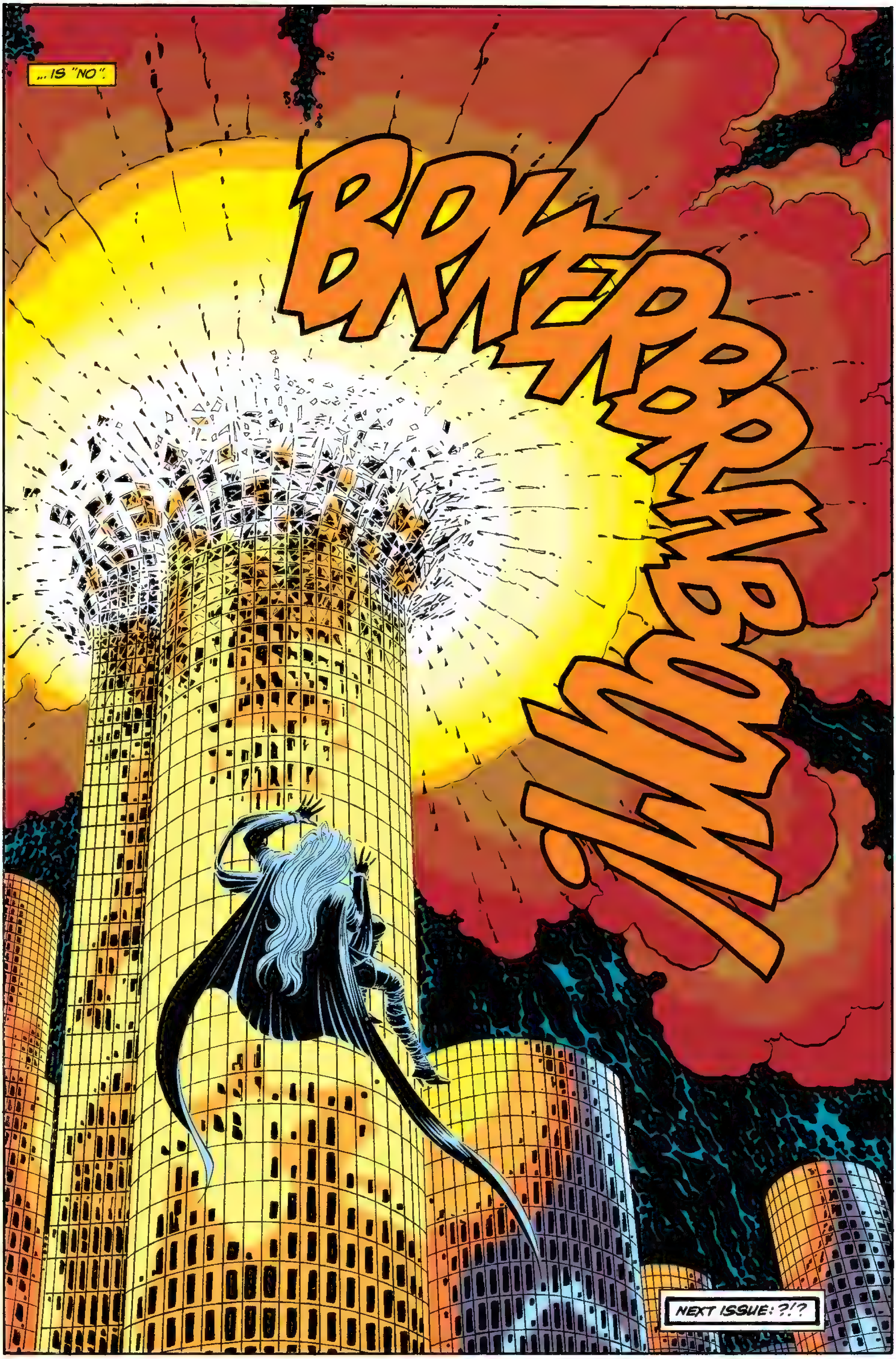

PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS.
SALEM CENTER, NEW YORK.
I KNOW YOU LIKE TEA, BUT ALL WE HAVE IS COFFEE.
I MEAN, I WOULD HAVE GOTTEN TEA, IF I KNEW YOU WERE GOING TO SURPRISE ME LIKE THIS.
BUT I GUESS IF I KNEW IT WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN A SURPRISE.
BUT AT LEAST I WOULD HAVE HAD THE TEA.
INSTEAD OF COFFEE.
BOBBY, YOU'RE BABBLING.
AM I, OPAL?
ABOUT THE TEA?
OR THE COFFEE?
I FIGURED IT WAS TIME WE EITHER TALKED THINGS THROUGH--
--ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED TO HIRO*...
...OR FIND A BIGGER APARTMENT.
IS THAT A THINLY VEILED REFERENCE TO THE DOZEN ROSES I'VE BEEN SENDING YOU EVERY DAY FOR THE PAST MONTH?
MAYBE NOT SO THINLY.
*UNCANNY #290.
SHAKE AN ICICLE, BOBBY-- WE'RE TEXAS BOUND IN TWO!
TEXAS?!
WHY DO WE--
WARREN?! COME BACK HERE! I CAN'T-- I--
MANOMAN
UM.
THAT WACKY WARREN.
HEH HEH...
GO.
REALLY?! I MEAN... ARE YOU SURE?
WE CAN DISCUSS THIS LATER.
OPAL, YOU'RE THE BEST.
BETTER THAN THE BEST!
BEYOND BEST!
SMK
WHO AM I TO ARGUE?
...
NOW GET GOING, YOU PROBABLY HAVE A WORLD TO SAVE.
NO SENSE WASTING ALL THAT TIME AND ENERGY ON ANYTHING AS TRIVIAL...
...AS THE WOMAN YOU LOVE.

THE AERIE.
UNLIKE EVERY OTHER MUTANT ON THE BLOCK, I'M NOT A BIG FAN OF MINDLESS VIOLENCE.
WHY DON'T YOU DO US BOTH A FAVOR AND LIE THERE UNTIL THE AUTHORITIES ARRIVE?
YOU CAN EXPLAIN YOUR MOTIVATION TO HENRY PETER GYRICH OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL. I'M SURE HE'LL BE FULL OF QUESTIONS.
PLEASE... ...HELP ME...
...HELP ME FINISH THE JOB I STARTED!
:URGHN:
FUNNY, YOU'RE NOT THE WARRIOR THAT PICTURE BOOKS PAINTED YOU TO BE!
THE GENESIS OF LEGEND WOULD NEVER HAVE ALLOWED HIMSELF TO BE SET-UP SO EASILY...
...TO DIE SO EASILY!
GENESIS?! S'NAME BISHOP CALLED ME THE DAY WE MET.
IT IS THE NAME YOU WOULD HAVE TAKEN IN THE FUTURE...
...A FUTURE THAT DEPENDED ON YOUR CONTINUED EXISTENCE.
HOW SAD THAT MUST NOT BE ALLOWED!
SAID HE HAS THE ABILITY TO SIPHON LIFE ENERGIES!
LET'S SEE WHAT HAPPENS WHEN HE TRIES IT ON A BIONIC HAND.


IT'S A NECESSARY EVIL AS OLD AS TIME ITSELF.
LITERALLY SACRIFICING A PART IN ORDER TO SAVE THE WHOLE.
MESMRO'S EYES!
BRRKSKT!
DESPITE THE SPITTING FLAME AND FLYING SHARDS--
--IT DOES LITTLE MORE THAN ANTAGONIZE HIS ENEMY.
YOU COULDN'T POSSIBLY KNOW...
...AS WE'VE JUST MET...
...BUT MY FATHER USED TO
HUMILIATE ME LIKE THIS.
ENJOYED MAKING ME LOOK FOOLISH
INCOMPETENT
AND YOU, NO DOUBT, GAVE HIM AMPLE OPPORTUNITY.
C'MON, FORGE--REACH THE GUN...
HOPE IT'S HELD ITS CHARGE.
BEFORE I ARRIVED I WAS CONTENT TO KILL YOU QUICKLY, FORGE.
SLYKT!
AS IT IS--BY THE TIME I'VE DECORATED YOUR HOME WITH YOUR LOWER INTESTINES--
--YOU'RE GOING TO WANT TO FINISH THE JOB YOURSELF!
INDEED...?


AND WHAT REASON CAN YOU THINK OF--
--THAT HE'D WANT TO MISS YOUR FUNERAL, TREVOR?
BISHOP?!
HOW DID YOU FIND ME HERE?!
I LOOKED UNDER CHRONOLOGICALLY DISPLACED GENE-TRASH IN THE PHONE BOOK.
VOILA.
IT'S YOUR FAULT I'M TRAPPED IN THIS CENTURY.
YOU AND THE CURSED XSE, HOUNDED ME AT EVERY TURN--
--TOSSING ME INTO THE PIT, SO THAT THE ONLY ESCAPE FROM MY FATHER'S WRATH...
... WAS TO TRAVEL BACK IN TIME!*
*SEE UNCANNY #287 FOR THE FULL STORY.
YOU'VE REALLY KIND OF FIXATED ON THIS "FATHER" DEAL.
WHY IS IT WE NEVER HEAR ABOUT YOUR MATERNAL RELATIONSHIP?
YOU WERE THERE WHEN SHE DIED AT YOUR SISTER'S HAND--
--AND NOW I WILL AVENGE HER MURDER!
PREEPPT!
IT'S NOT A SOUND OFTEN ATTRIBUTED TO TORN FLESH.
INSTEAD OF THE RIPPING AND TEARING...
...IT'S MORE LIKE THE NOISE A BALLOON MAKES WHEN LOSING AIR...
...OR THE SOUND OF BREAKING GLASS.


AN ILLUSION SHATTERED.
¡UURRGNN!
RAVEN?!
I TOLD YOU TO STAY AWAY-- TO SEND FOR HELP!
DID.
BUT... Y'THINK I'D
MISS ALL
THE FUN?
FIVE SECONDS.
YOU'VE GOT FIVE SECONDS BEFORE MY BATTLE ARMOR REACHES A FULL NEUTRON CHARGE!
BUT-- EVEN THE SLIGHTEST EXPLOSION WOULD THREATEN THE LIVES OF INNOCENT PEOPLE IN THE PLAZA BELOW!
YEAH.
SO?
PUT THE SHIP IN HOVER, BISHOP-- THEN JOIN ME WHEN YOU CAN.
I WILL SEE TO FORGE AND MYSTIQUE...
...AND ASK THAT THE BRIGHT LADY PROTECT HIM UNTIL I ARRIVE!
EVEN AS SHE THINKS THESE THOUGHTS, ORORO IS AWARE OF A SIMPLE TRUTH.
THAT NO PRAYER EVER GOES UNANSWERED.
BUT--WHERE THE X-MEN ARE CONCERNED-- MORE OFTEN THAN NOT THE ANSWER...


...IS "NO".
BRKKERRRRAABOOM!
NEXT ISSUE: ?!?

MARVEL COMICS
THE UNCANNY
X-MEN
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JUL
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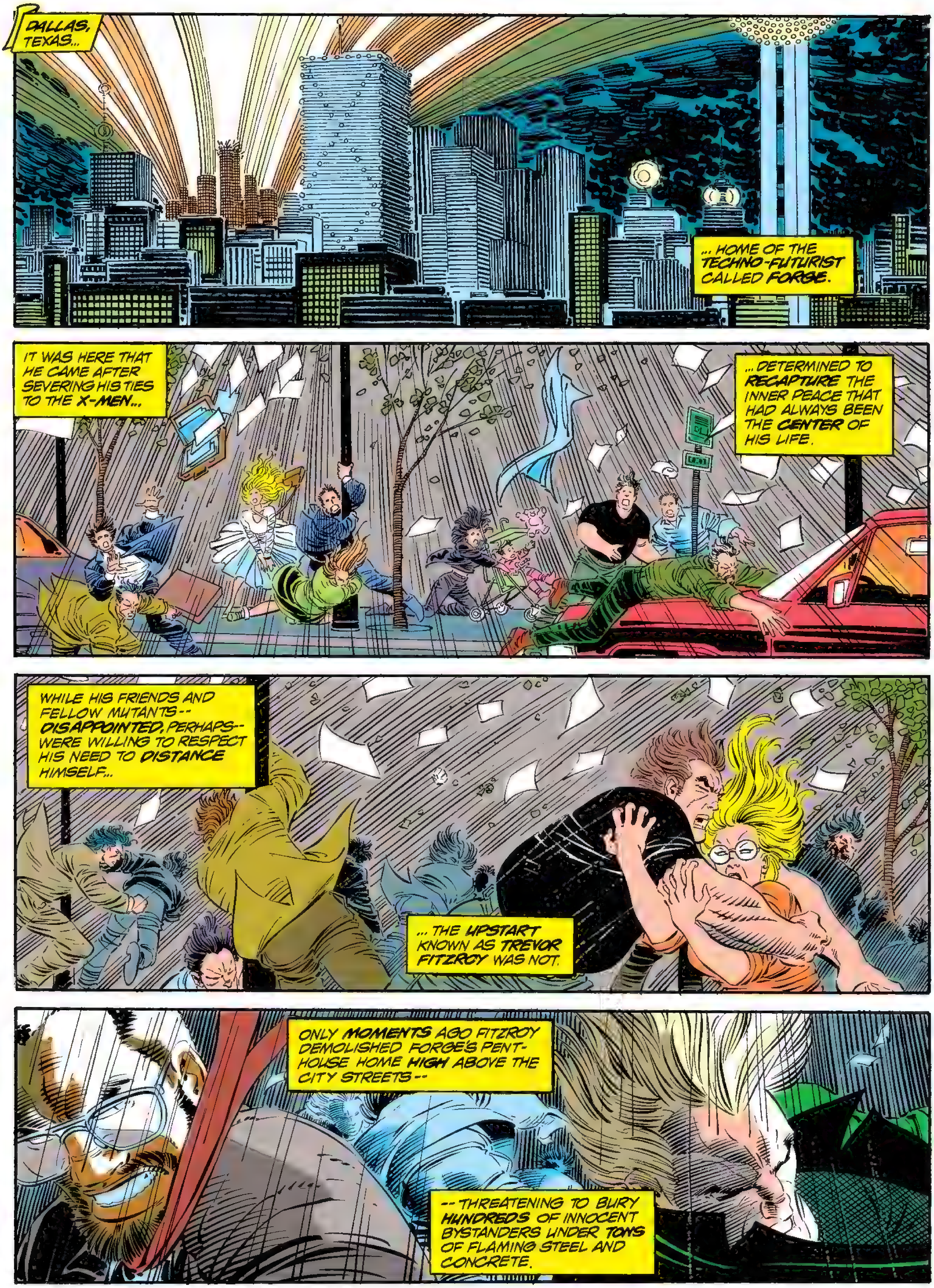
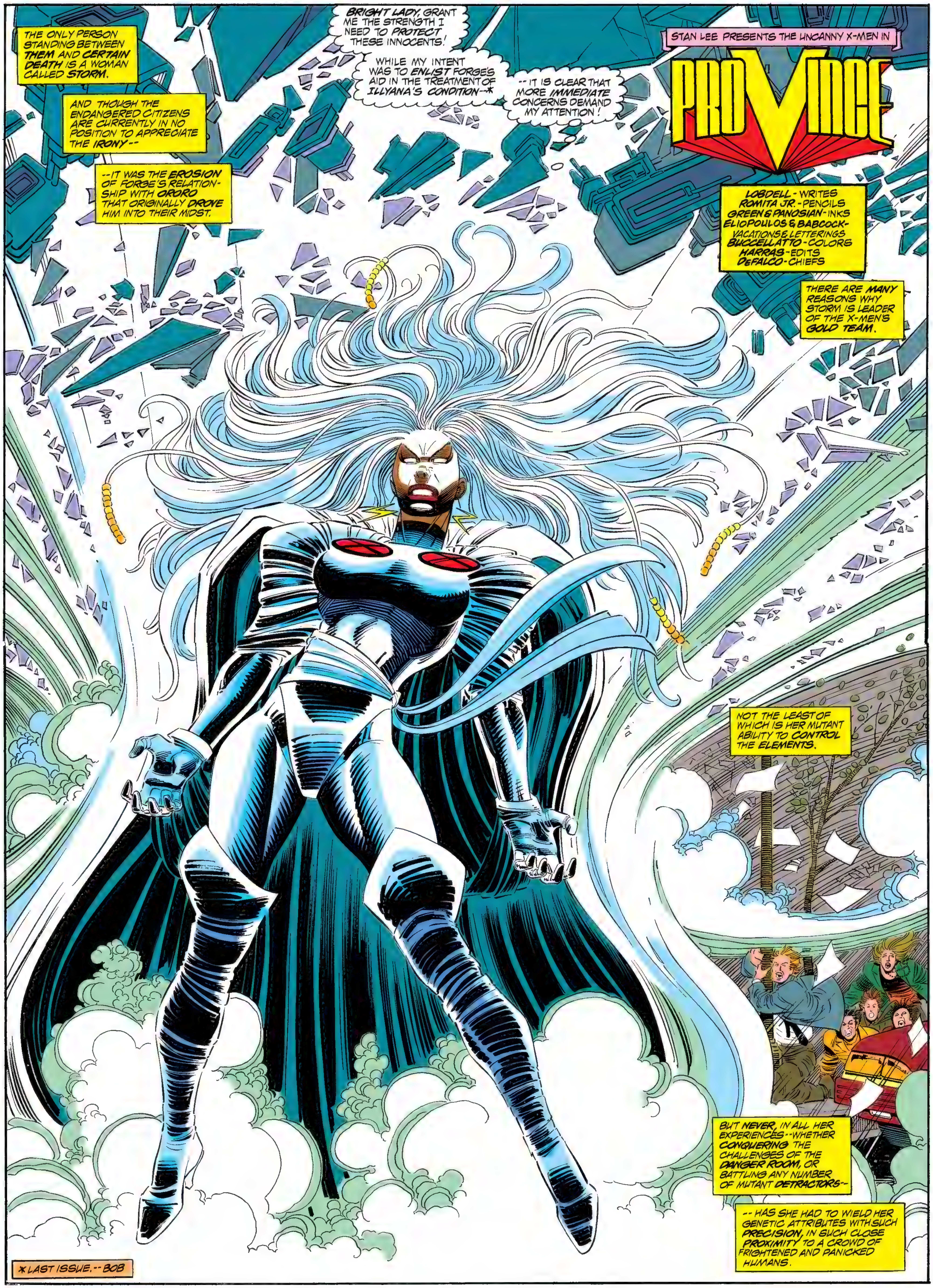
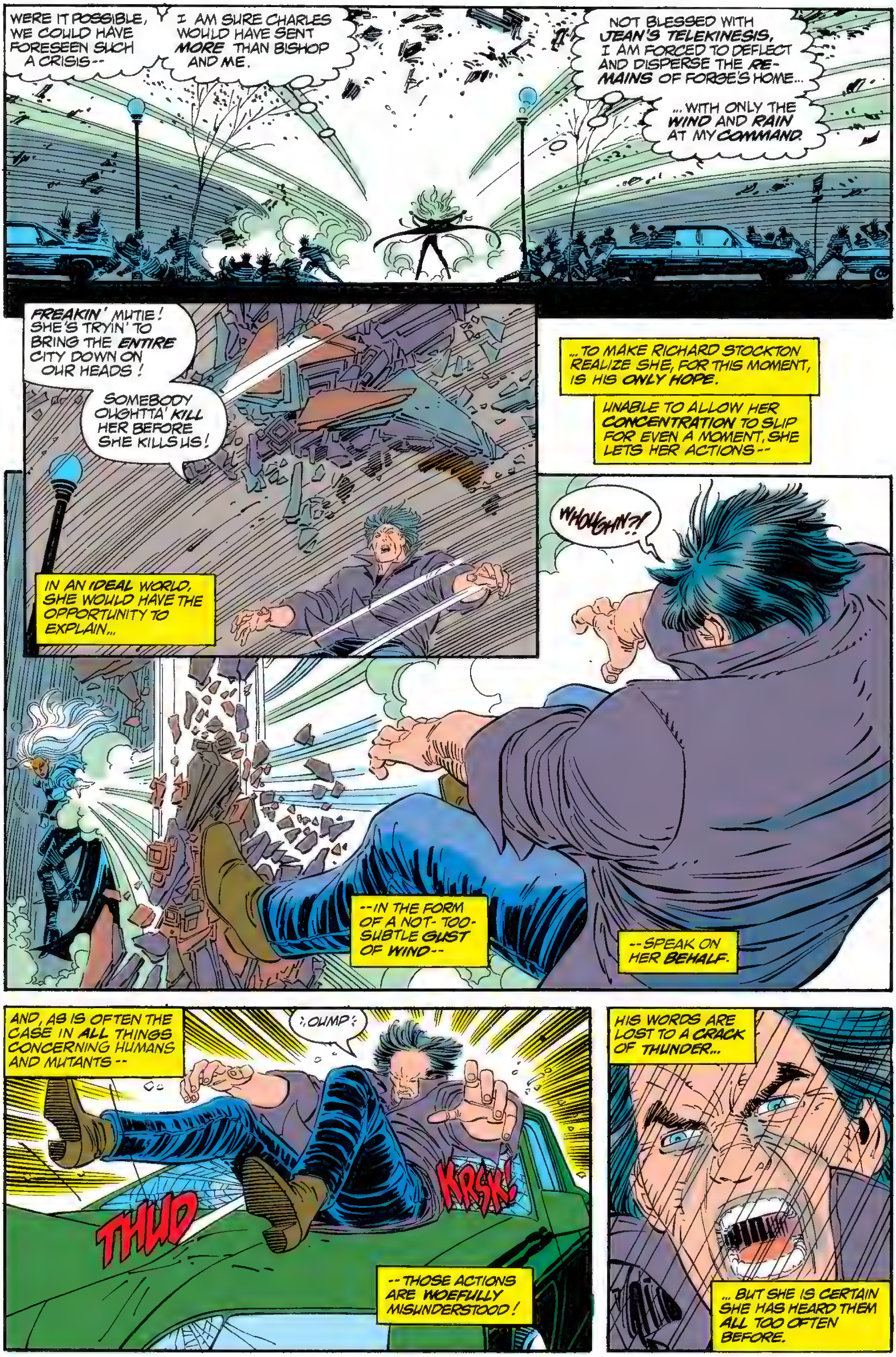
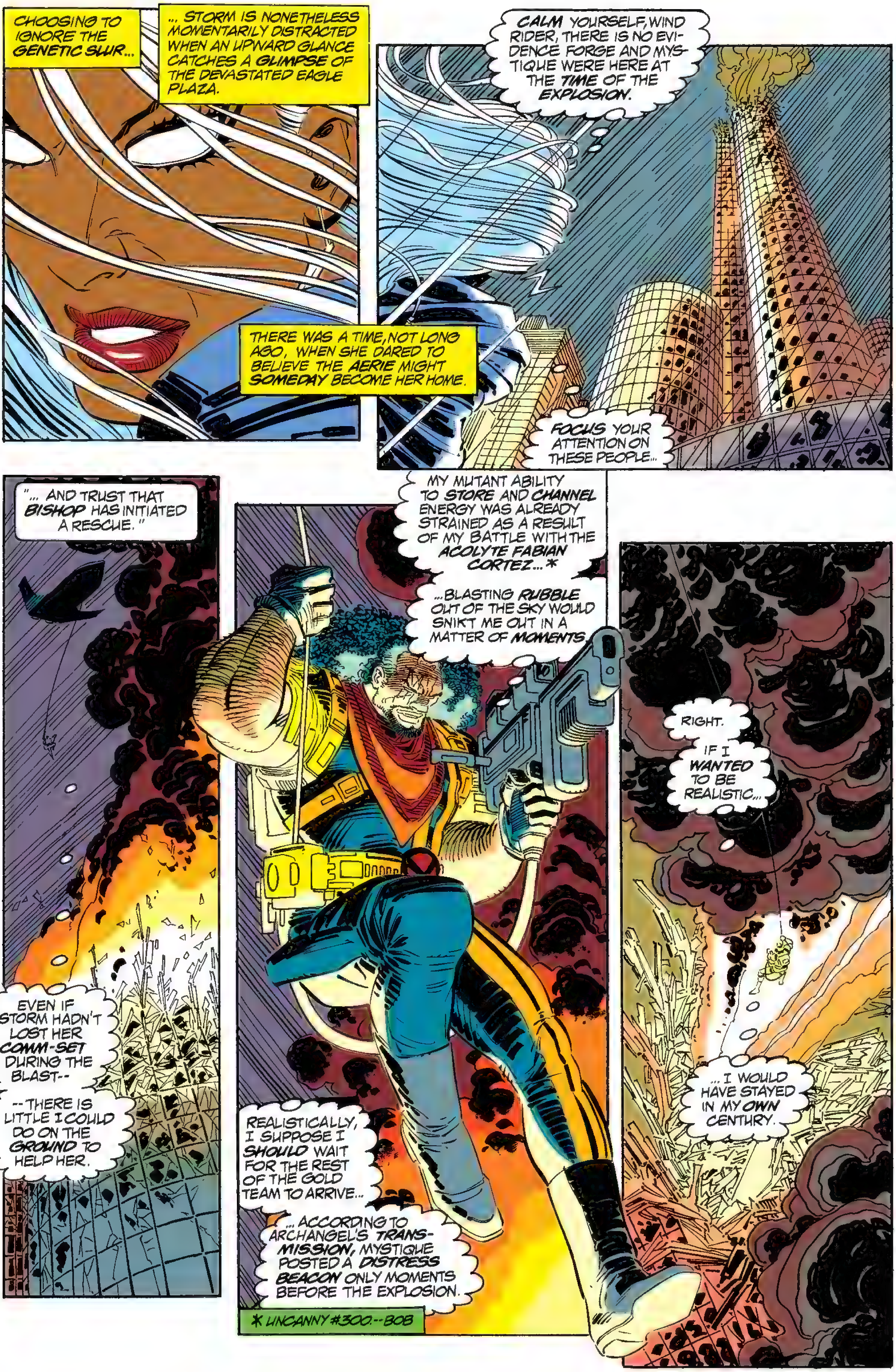
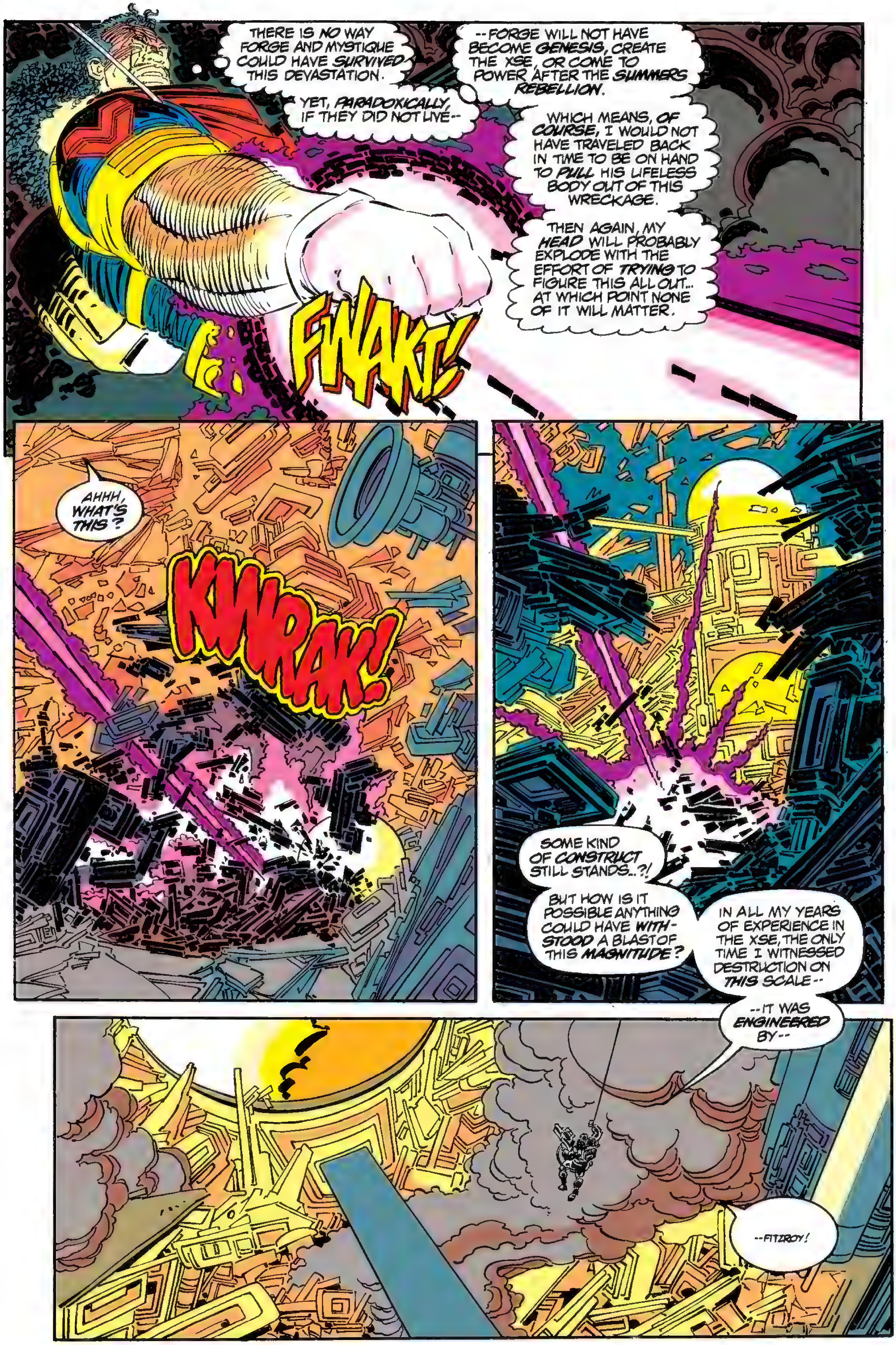
COLOSSUS UNLEASHED!
JRJR + PANOSIAN

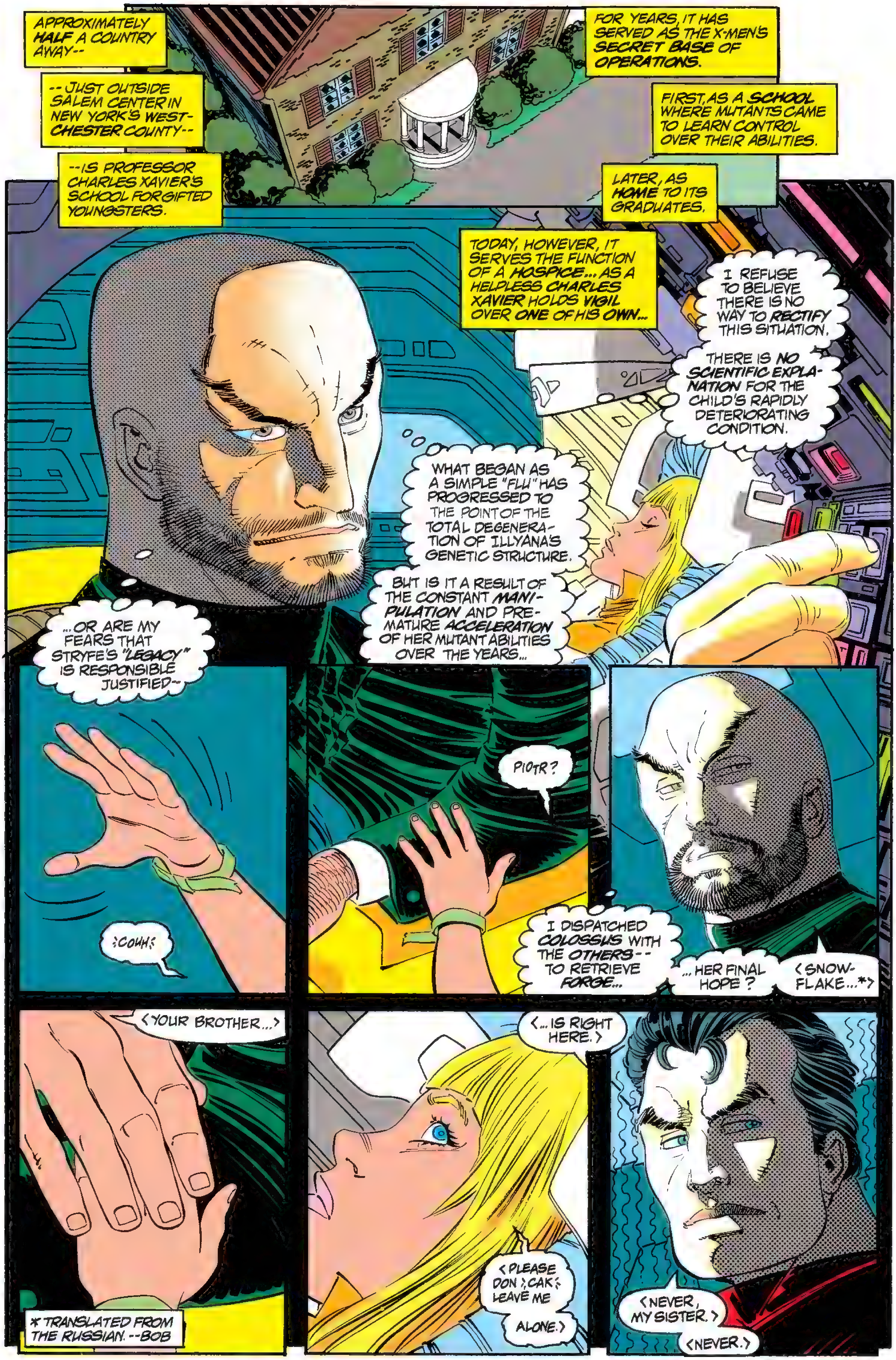

DALLAS, TEXAS...
...HOME OF THE TECHNO-FUTURIST CALLED FORGE.
IT WAS HERE THAT HE CAME AFTER SEVERING HIS TIES TO THE X-MEN...
...DETERMINED TO RECAPTURE THE INNER PEACE THAT HAD ALWAYS BEEN THE CENTER OF HIS LIFE.
WHILE HIS FRIENDS AND FELLOW MUTANTS--DISAPPOINTED, PERHAPS--WERE WILLING TO RESPECT HIS NEED TO DISTANCE HIMSELF...
...THE UPSTART KNOWN AS TREVOR FITZROY WAS NOT.
ONLY MOMENTS AGO FITZROY DEMOLISHED FORGE'S PENTHOUSE HOME HIGH ABOVE THE CITY STREETS--
--THREATENING TO BURY HUNDREDS OF INNOCENT BYSTANDERS UNDER TONS OF FLAMING STEEL AND CONCRETE.


THE ONLY PERSON STANDING BETWEEN THEM AND CERTAIN DEATH IS A WOMAN CALLED STORM.
AND THOUGH THE ENDANGERED CITIZENS ARE CURRENTLY IN NO POSITION TO APPRECIATE THE IRONY--
--IT WAS THE EROSION OF FORGE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH ORORO THAT ORIGINALLY DROVE HIM INTO THEIR MIDST.
BRIGHT LADY, GRANT ME THE STRENGTH I NEED TO PROTECT THESE INNOCENTS!
WHILE MY INTENT WAS TO ENLIST FORGE'S AID IN THE TREATMENT OF ILLYANA'S CONDITION--*
--IT IS CLEAR THAT MORE IMMEDIATE CONCERNS DEMAND MY ATTENTION!
STAN LEE PRESENTS THE UNCANNY X-MEN IN
PROVINCE
LOBDELL-WRITES
ROMITA JR.-PENCILS
GREEN & PANOSIAN-INKS
ELIOPOULOS & BABCOCK-VACATIONS & LETTERINGS
BUCCELLATTO-COLORS
HARRAS-EDITS
DEFALCO-CHIEFS
THERE ARE MANY REASONS WHY STORM IS LEADER OF THE X-MEN'S GOLD TEAM.
NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH IS HER MUTANT ABILITY TO CONTROL THE ELEMENTS.
BUT NEVER, IN ALL HER EXPERIENCES--WHETHER CONQUERING THE CHALLENGES OF THE DANGER ROOM, OR BATTLING ANY NUMBER OF MUTANT DETRACTORS--
--HAS SHE HAD TO WIELD HER GENETIC ATTRIBUTES WITH SUCH PRECISION, IN SUCH CLOSE PROXIMITY TO A CROWD OF FRIGHTENED AND PANICKED HUMANS.
*LAST ISSUE.--BOB

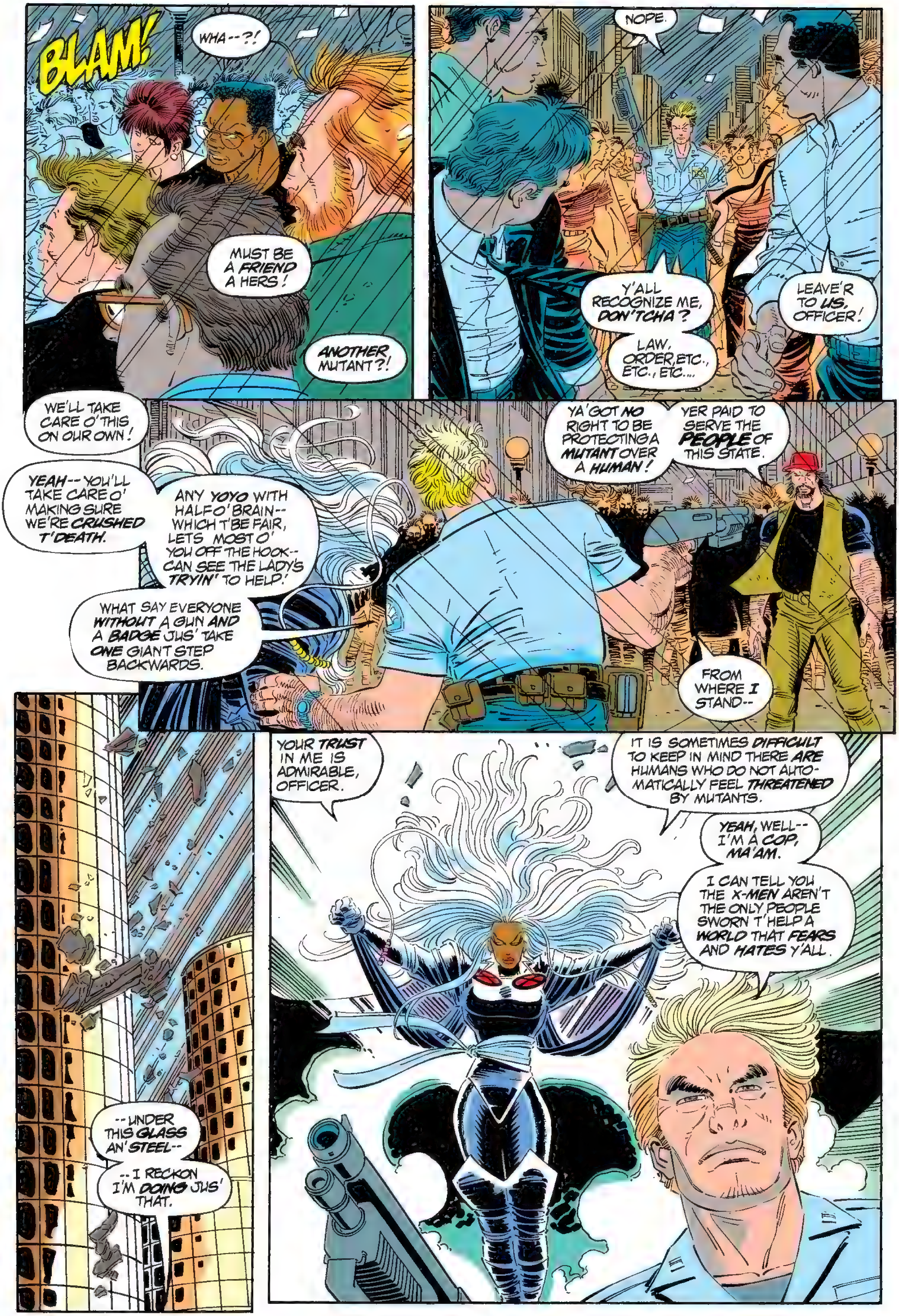

WERE IT POSSIBLE, WE COULD HAVE FORESEEN SUCH A CRISIS--
I AM SURE CHARLES WOULD HAVE SENT MORE THAN BISHOP AND ME.
NOT BLESSED WITH JEAN'S TELEKINESIS, I AM FORCED TO DEFLECT AND DISPERSE THE REMAINS OF FORGE'S HOME...
...WITH ONLY THE WIND AND RAIN AT MY COMMAND.
FREAKIN' MUTIE! SHE'S TRYIN' TO BRING THE ENTIRE CITY DOWN ON OUR HEADS!
SOMEBODY OUGHTTA' KILL HER BEFORE SHE KILLS US!
IN AN IDEAL WORLD, SHE WOULD HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN...
...TO MAKE RICHARD STOCKTON REALIZE SHE, FOR THIS MOMENT, IS HIS ONLY HOPE.
UNABLE TO ALLOW HER CONCENTRATION TO SLIP FOR EVEN A MOMENT, SHE LETS HER ACTIONS--
WHOUGHN?!
--IN THE FORM OF A NOT-TOO-SUBTLE GUST OF WIND--
--SPEAK ON HER BEHALF.
AND, AS IS OFTEN THE CASE IN ALL THINGS CONCERNING HUMANS AND MUTANTS--
:OUMP:
THUD
KRSK!
--THOSE ACTIONS ARE WOEFULLY MISUNDERSTOOD!
HIS WORDS ARE LOST TO A CRACK OF THUNDER...
...BUT SHE IS CERTAIN SHE HAS HEARD THEM ALL TOO OFTEN BEFORE.


CHOOSING TO IGNORE THE GENETIC SLUR...
... STORM IS NONETHELESS MOMENTARILY DISTRACTED WHEN AN UPWARD GLANCE CATCHES A GLIMPSE OF THE DEVASTATED EAGLE PLAZA.
THERE WAS A TIME, NOT LONG AGO, WHEN SHE DARED TO BELIEVE THE AERIE MIGHT SOMEDAY BECOME HER HOME.
CALM YOURSELF, WIND RIDER, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE FORGE AND MYSTIQUE WERE HERE AT THE TIME OF THE EXPLOSION.
FOCUS YOUR ATTENTION ON THESE PEOPLE...
"... AND TRUST THAT BISHOP HAS INITIATED A RESCUE."
EVEN IF STORM HADN'T LOST HER COMM-SET DURING THE BLAST--
--THERE IS LITTLE I COULD DO ON THE GROUND TO HELP HER.
MY MUTANT ABILITY TO STORE AND CHANNEL ENERGY WAS ALREADY STRAINED AS A RESULT OF MY BATTLE WITH THE ACOLYTE FABIAN CORTEZ...*
...BLASTING RUBBLE OUT OF THE SKY WOULD SNIKT ME OUT IN A MATTER OF MOMENTS.
REALISTICALLY, I SUPPOSE I SHOULD WAIT FOR THE REST OF THE GOLD TEAM TO ARRIVE...
... ACCORDING TO ARCHANGEL'S TRANSMISSION, MYSTIQUE POSTED A DISTRESS BEACON ONLY MOMENTS BEFORE THE EXPLOSION.
* UNCANNY #300.--BOB
RIGHT.
IF I WANTED TO BE REALISTIC...
... I WOULD HAVE STAYED IN MY OWN CENTURY.


THERE IS NO WAY FORGE AND MYSTIQUE COULD HAVE SURVIVED THIS DEVASTATION.
YET, PARADOXICALLY, IF THEY DID NOT LIVE--
--FORGE WILL NOT HAVE BECOME GENESIS, CREATE THE XSE, OR COME TO POWER AFTER THE SUMMERS REBELLION.
WHICH MEANS, OF COURSE, I WOULD NOT HAVE TRAVELED BACK IN TIME TO BE ON HAND TO PULL HIS LIFELESS BODY OUT OF THIS WRECKAGE.
THEN AGAIN, MY HEAD WILL PROBABLY EXPLODE WITH THE EFFORT OF TRYING TO FIGURE THIS ALL OUT.. AT WHICH POINT NONE OF IT WILL MATTER.
FWAKT!
AHHH, WHAT'S THIS?
KWRAK!
SOME KIND OF CONSTRUCT STILL STANDS..?!
BUT HOW IS IT POSSIBLE ANYTHING COULD HAVE WITHSTOOD A BLAST OF THIS MAGNITUDE?
IN ALL MY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN THE XSE, THE ONLY TIME I WITNESSED DESTRUCTION ON THIS SCALE--
--IT WAS ENGINEERED BY--
--FITZROY!


APPROXIMATELY HALF A COUNTRY AWAY--
-- JUST OUTSIDE SALEM CENTER IN NEW YORK'S WESTCHESTER COUNTY--
--IS PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS.
FOR YEARS, IT HAS SERVED AS THE X-MEN'S SECRET BASE OF OPERATIONS.
FIRST, AS A SCHOOL WHERE MUTANTS CAME TO LEARN CONTROL OVER THEIR ABILITIES.
LATER, AS HOME TO ITS GRADUATES.
TODAY, HOWEVER, IT SERVES THE FUNCTION OF A HOSPICE... AS A HELPLESS CHARLES XAVIER HOLDS VIGIL OVER ONE OF HIS OWN...
I REFUSE TO BELIEVE THERE IS NO WAY TO RECTIFY THIS SITUATION.
THERE IS NO SCIENTIFIC EXPLANATION FOR THE CHILD'S RAPIDLY DETERIORATING CONDITION.
WHAT BEGAN AS A SIMPLE "FLU" HAS PROGRESSED TO THE POINT OF THE TOTAL DEGENERATION OF ILLYANA'S GENETIC STRUCTURE.
BUT IS IT A RESULT OF THE CONSTANT MANIPULATION AND PREMATURE ACCELERATION OF HER MUTANT ABILITIES OVER THE YEARS...
...OR ARE MY FEARS THAT STRYFE'S "LEGACY" IS RESPONSIBLE JUSTIFIED--
;COUH;
PIOTR?
I DISPATCHED COLOSSUS WITH THE OTHERS-- TO RETRIEVE FORGE...
...HER FINAL HOPE?
<SNOW-FLAKE...*>
<YOUR BROTHER...>
<...IS RIGHT HERE.>
<PLEASE DON ;CAK; LEAVE ME ALONE.>
<NEVER, MY SISTER.>
<NEVER.>
* TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN. --BOB

DALLAS.
IT SEEMS I HAVE PLACED MYSELF IN A DOUBLE-BIND.
THE MORE I USE MY POWER TO SHEPHERD THE FALLING WRECKAGE AWAY FROM THE POPULATED AREA--
-- THE MORE THE STORM EFFECTS THE DAMAGED BUILDING...CREATING MORE DEBRIS.
IT TAKES SOMETHING SHORT OF AN INSTANT--
--SOMETHING LESS THAN A METER WIDE--
--TO PENETRATE THE TENUOUS WALL OF WIND AND RAIN WHICH ACTS AS HER ONLY MEANS OF DEFENSE.
IT IS ENOUGH.
BWAK!
GODDESS, NO!
LOOK, SHE'S DOWN!
GET HER! BEFORE SHE DROWNS US ALL!
SOMEONE STOP HER!
GENE-FREAK!
PLOK!
YOU DO NOT UNDER-- UHN.
I UNDERSTAND YOU AND YOUR KIND ARE A DANGER, LADY--
...TO THE WHOLE WORLD.
--TO ME AND MY FAMILY...
PLEASE, I AM TRYING TO HELP.


BLAM!
WHA--?!
MUST BE A FRIEND A HERS!
ANOTHER MUTANT?!
NOPE.
Y'ALL RECOGNIZE ME, DON'TCHA?
LAW, ORDER, ETC., ETC., ETC....
LEAVE'R TO US, OFFICER!
WE'LL TAKE CARE O' THIS ON OUR OWN!
YEAH-- YOU'LL TAKE CARE O' MAKING SURE WE'RE CRUSHED T'DEATH.
ANY YOYO WITH HALF O' BRAIN-- WHICH T'BE FAIR, LETS MOST O' YOU OFF THE HOOK-- CAN SEE THE LADY'S TRYIN' TO HELP!
WHAT SAY EVERYONE WITHOUT A GUN AND A BADGE JUS' TAKE ONE GIANT STEP BACKWARDS.
YA'GOT NO RIGHT TO BE PROTECTING A MUTANT OVER A HUMAN!
YER PAID TO SERVE THE PEOPLE OF THIS STATE.
FROM WHERE I STAND--
--UNDER THIS GLASS AN' STEEL--
--I RECKON I'M DOING JUS' THAT.
YOUR TRUST IN ME IS ADMIRABLE, OFFICER.
IT IS SOMETIMES DIFFICULT TO KEEP IN MIND THERE ARE HUMANS WHO DO NOT AUTOMATICALLY FEEL THREATENED BY MUTANTS.
YEAH, WELL-- I'M A COP, MA'AM.
I CAN TELL YOU THE X-MEN AREN'T THE ONLY PEOPLE SWORN T'HELP A WORLD THAT FEARS AND HATES Y'ALL.

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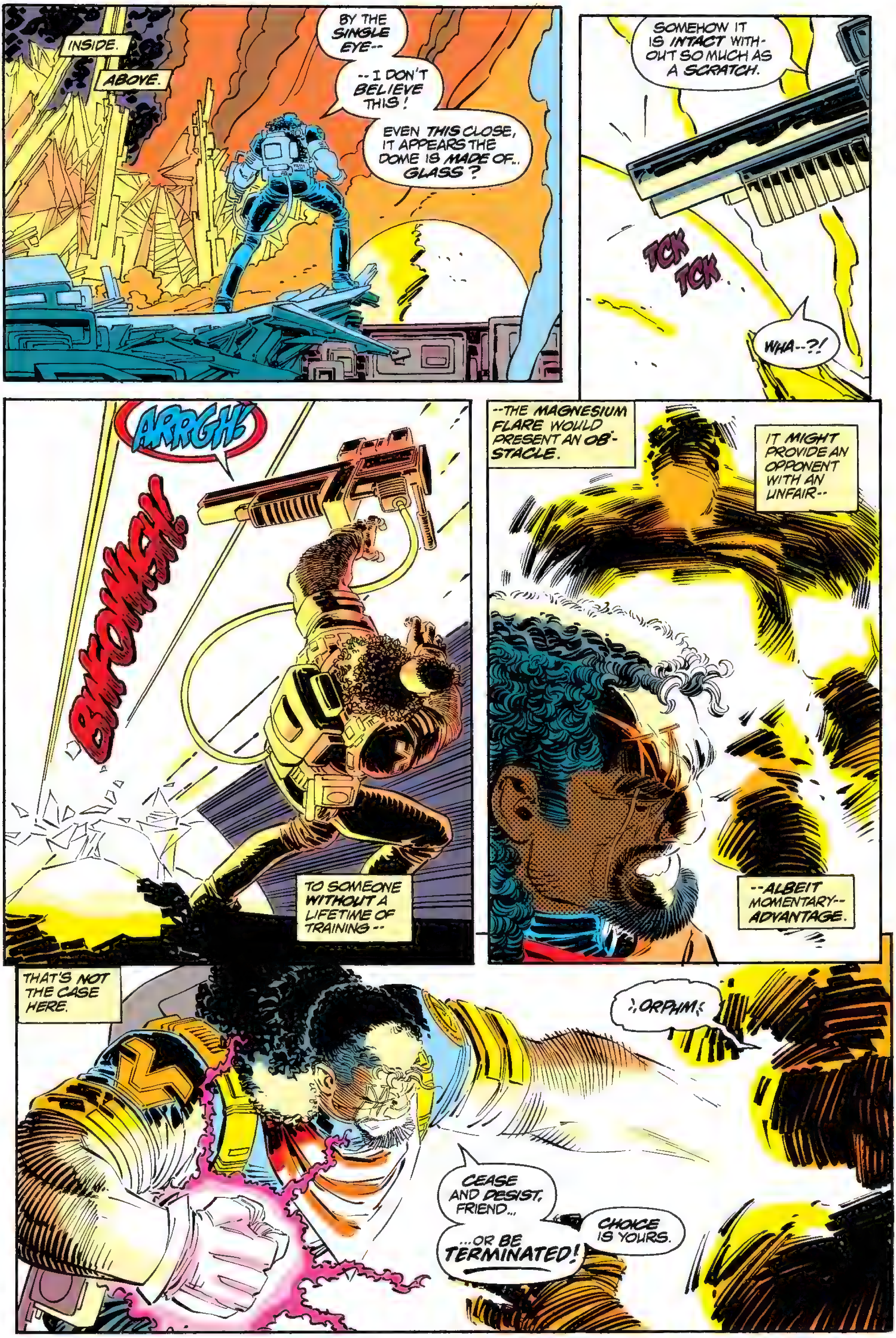
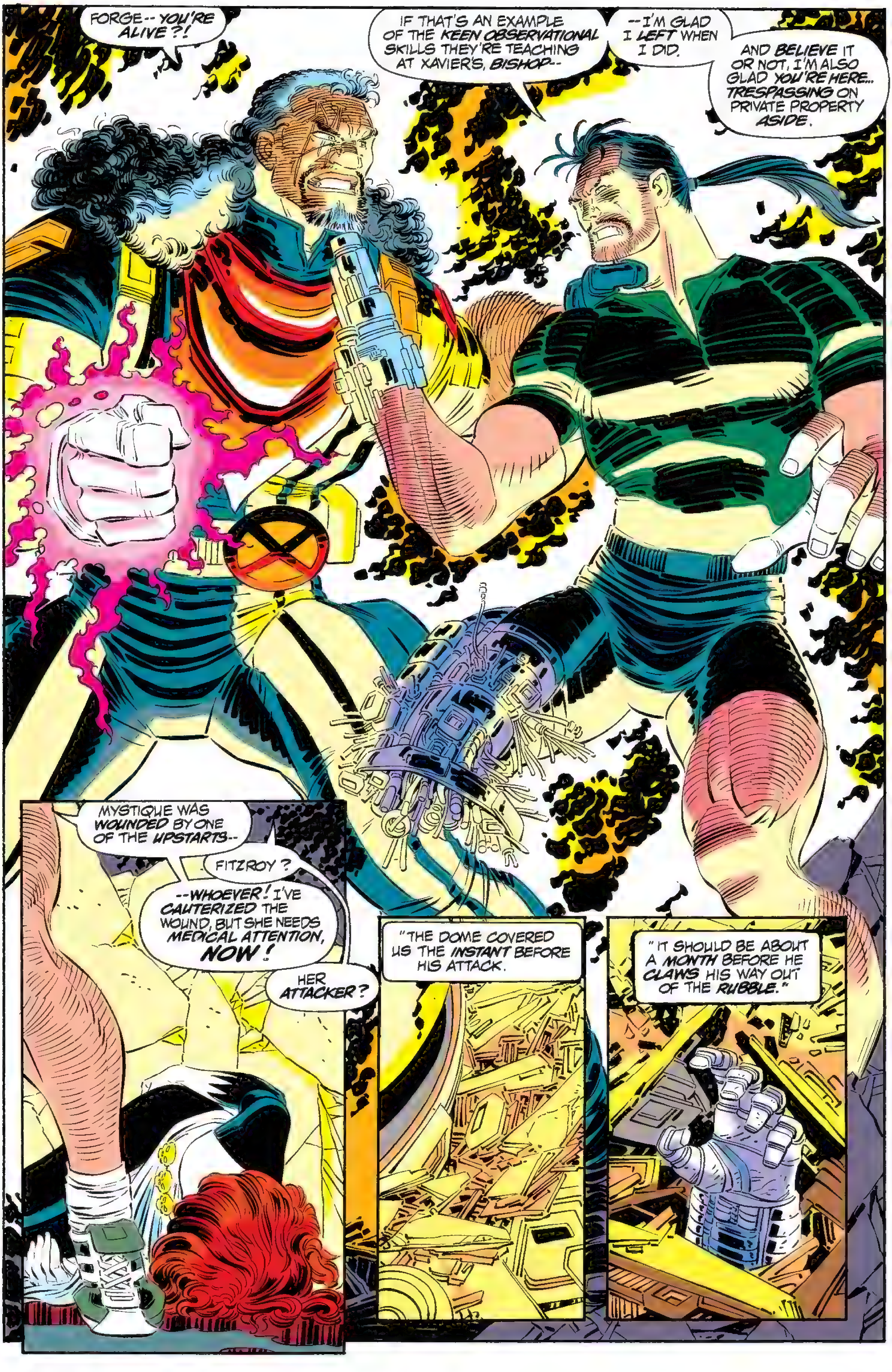
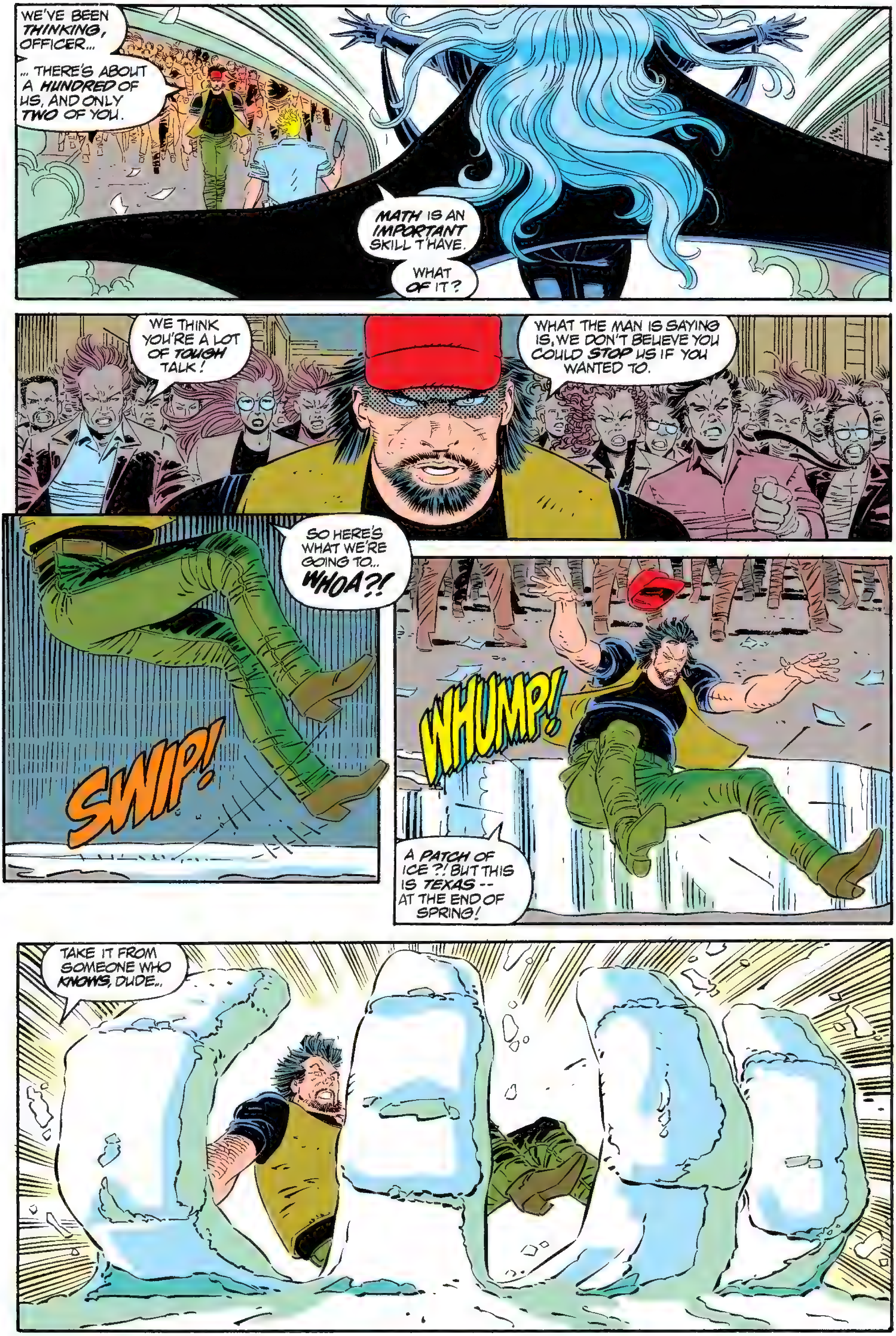
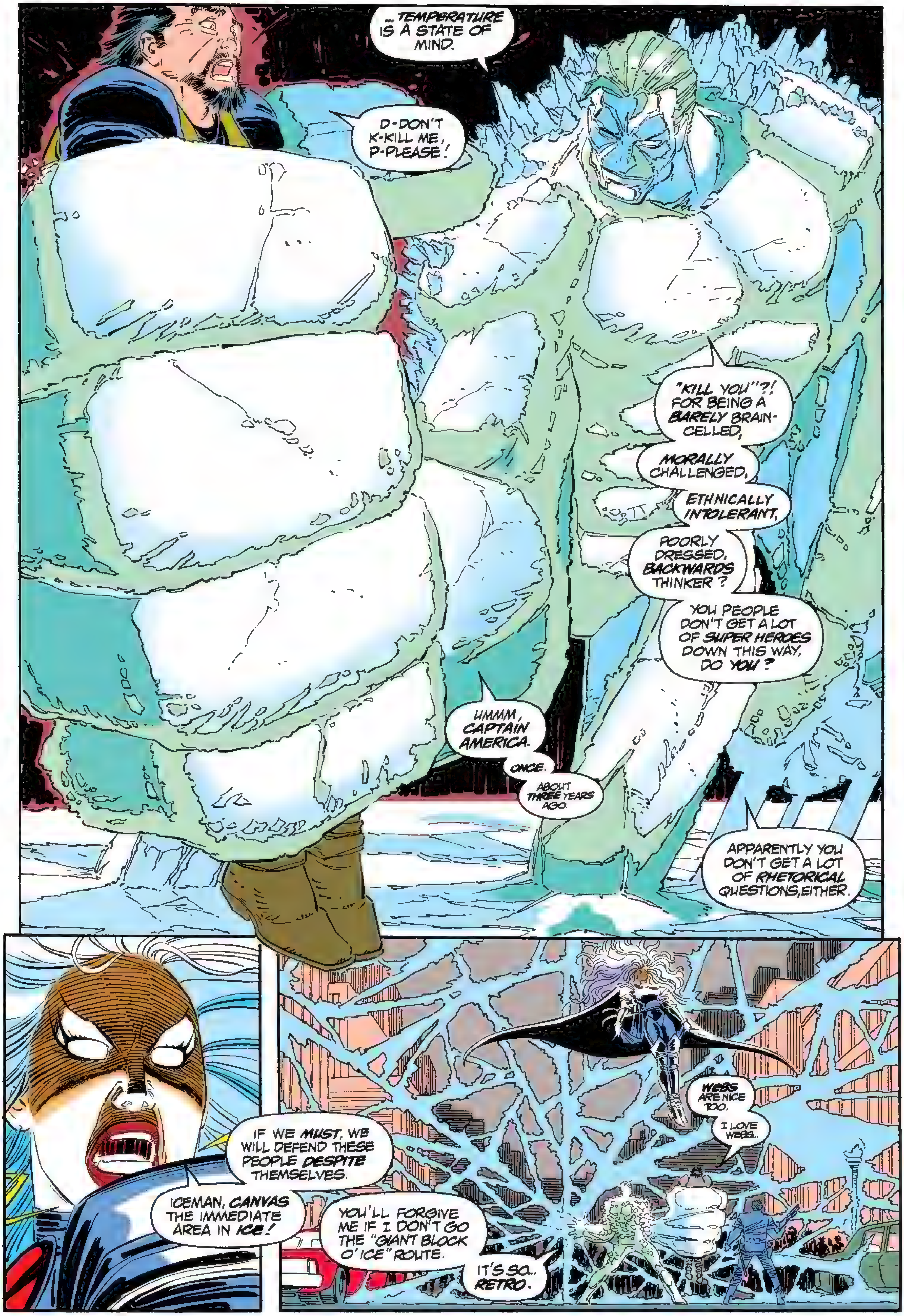
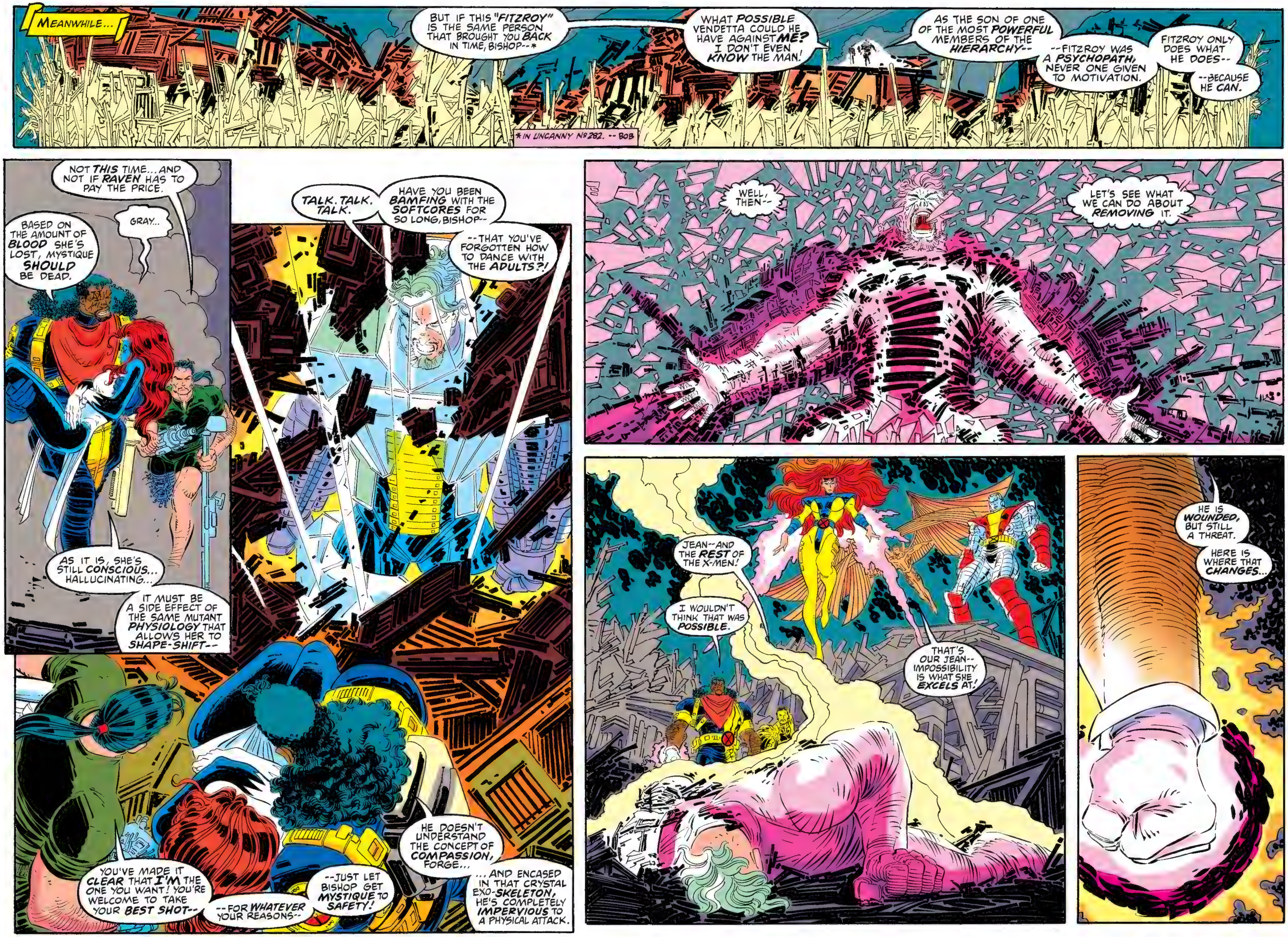
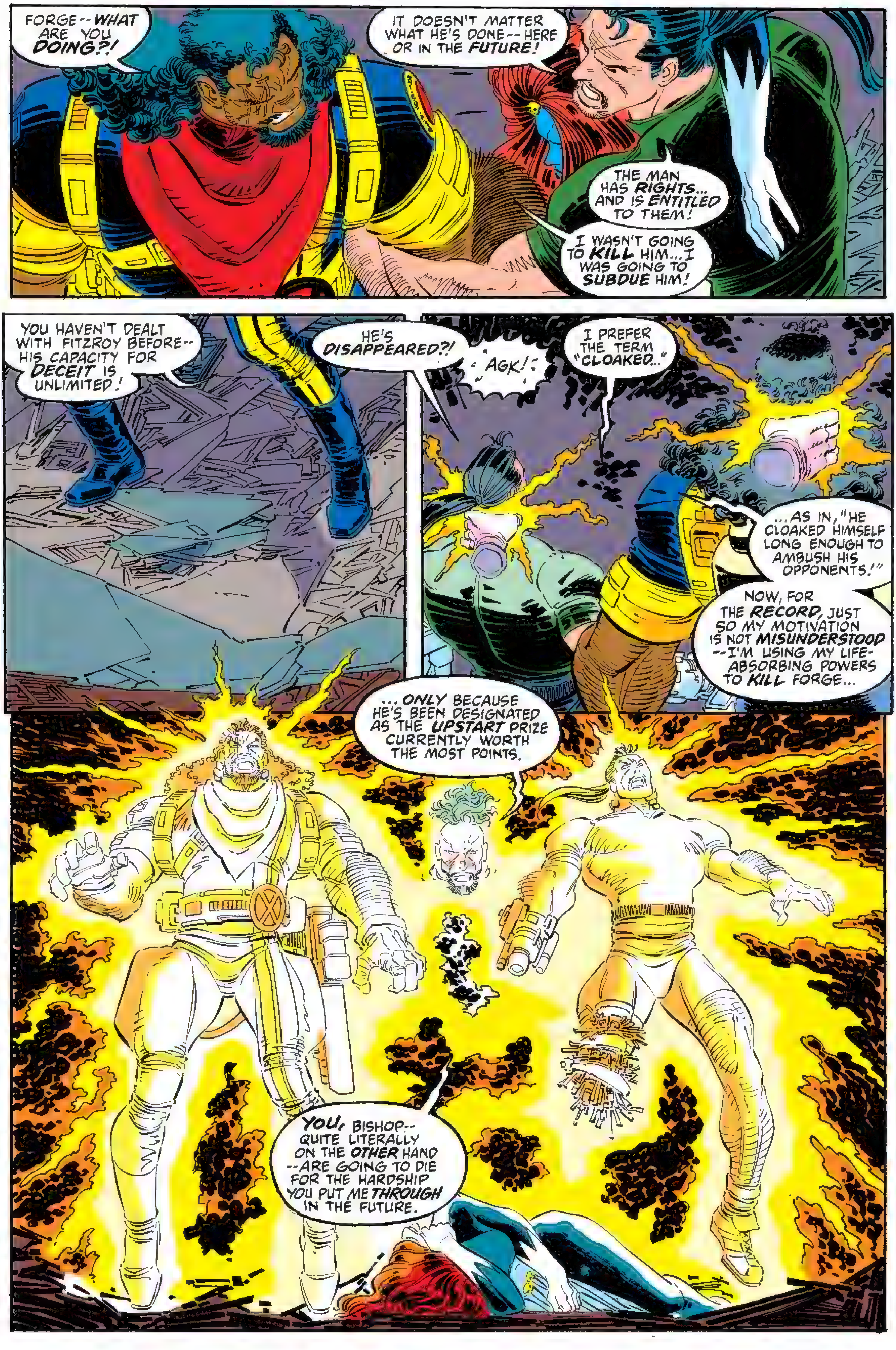

INSIDE.
ABOVE.
BY THE SINGLE EYE--
--I DON'T BELIEVE THIS!
EVEN THIS CLOSE, IT APPEARS THE DOME IS MADE OF.. GLASS?
SOMEHOW IT IS INTACT WITHOUT SO MUCH AS A SCRATCH.
TCK TCK
WHA--?!
ARRGH!
BWOWSH!
TO SOMEONE WITHOUT A LIFETIME OF TRAINING--
--THE MAGNESIUM FLARE WOULD PRESENT AN OBSTACLE.
IT MIGHT PROVIDE AN OPPONENT WITH AN UNFAIR--
--ALBEIT MOMENTARY--ADVANTAGE.
THAT'S NOT THE CASE HERE.
ORPHM!
CEASE AND DESIST, FRIEND...
...OR BE TERMINATED!
CHOICE IS YOURS.

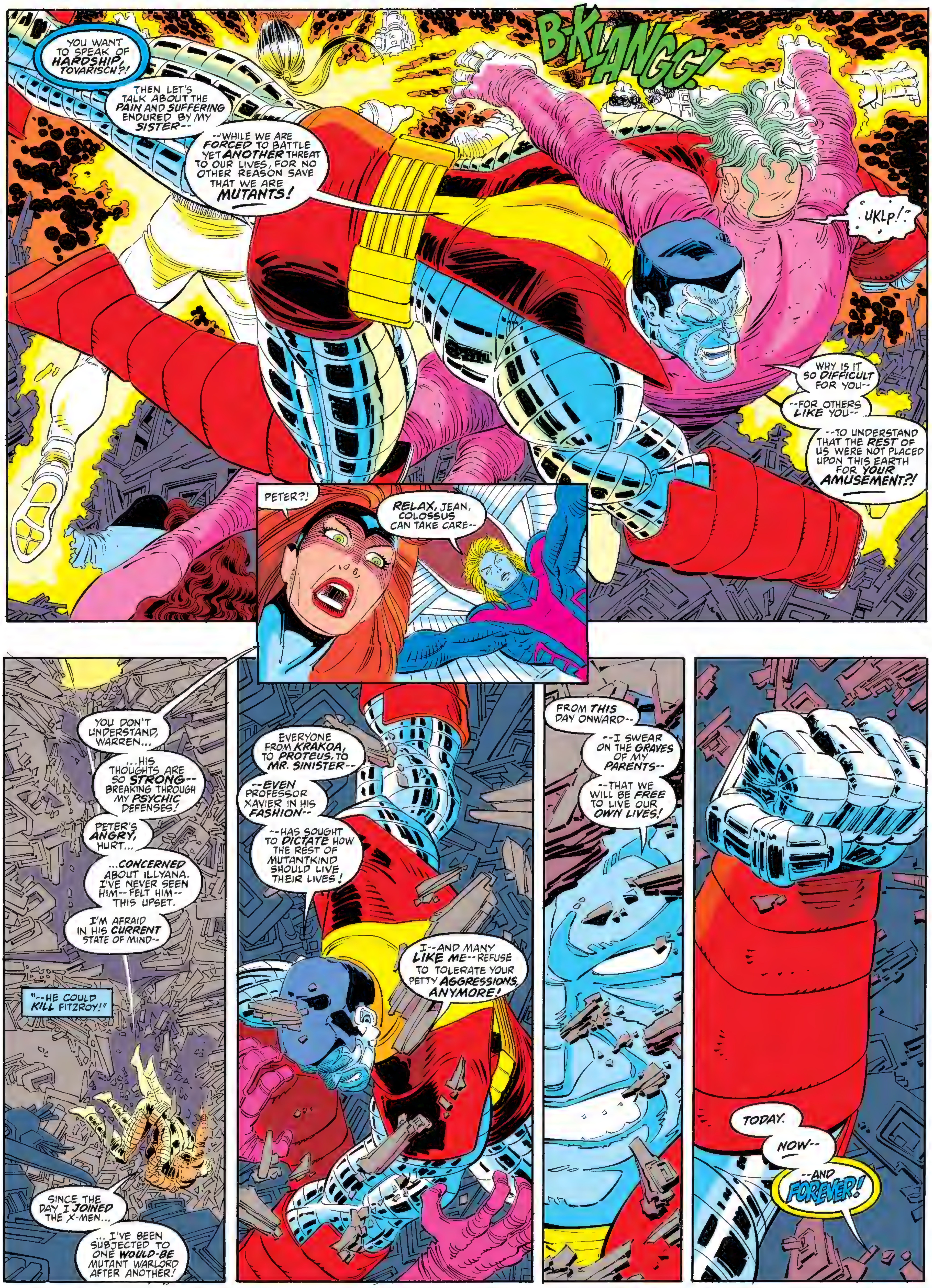

FORGE-- *YOU'RE ALIVE?!*
IF THAT'S AN EXAMPLE OF THE *KEEN OBSERVATIONAL* SKILLS THEY'RE TEACHING AT XAVIER'S, *BISHOP*--
--I'M GLAD I *LEFT* WHEN I DID.
AND *BELIEVE* IT OR NOT, I'M ALSO GLAD *YOU'RE HERE... TRESPASSING* ON PRIVATE PROPERTY *ASIDE*.
MYSTIQUE WAS *WOUNDED* BY ONE OF THE *UPSTARTS*--
FITZROY?
--*WHOEVER!* I'VE *CAUTERIZED* THE WOUND, BUT SHE NEEDS *MEDICAL ATTENTION, NOW!*
HER *ATTACKER?*
"THE DOME COVERED US THE *INSTANT* BEFORE HIS ATTACK.
"IT SHOULD BE ABOUT A *MONTH* BEFORE HE *CLAWS* HIS WAY OUT OF THE *RUBBLE*."

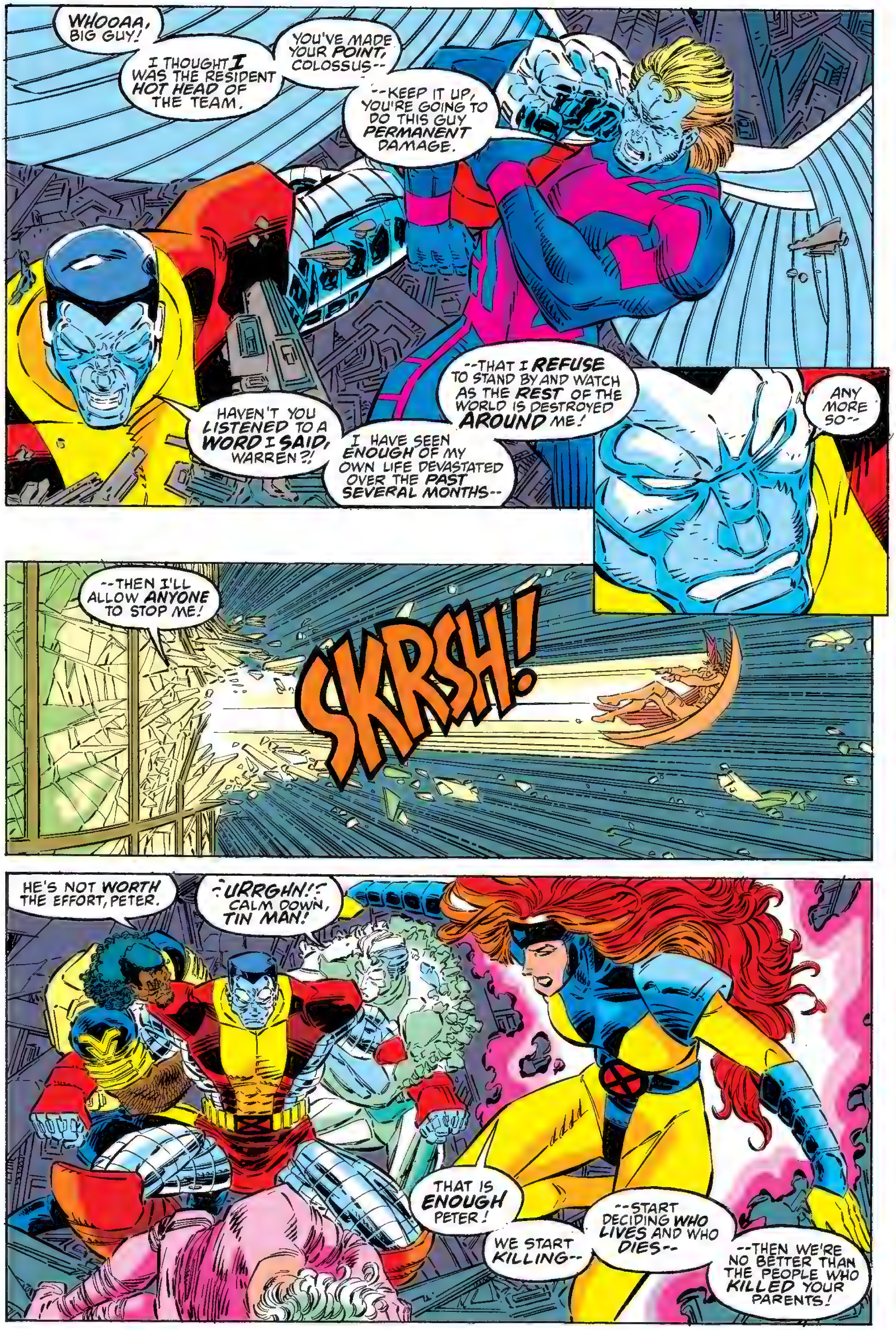

WE'VE BEEN *THINKING*, OFFICER...
... THERE'S ABOUT A *HUNDRED* OF US, AND ONLY *TWO* OF YOU.
MATH IS AN *IMPORTANT* SKILL T'HAVE.
WHAT *OF* IT?
WE THINK YOU'RE A LOT OF *TOUGH* TALK!
WHAT THE MAN IS SAYING IS, WE DON'T BELIEVE YOU COULD *STOP* US IF YOU WANTED TO.
SO HERE'S WHAT WE'RE GOING TO... *WHOA?!*
SWIP!
WHUMP!
A *PATCH* OF ICE?! BUT THIS IS *TEXAS* -- AT THE END OF SPRING!
TAKE IT FROM SOMEONE WHO *KNOWS*, DUDE...

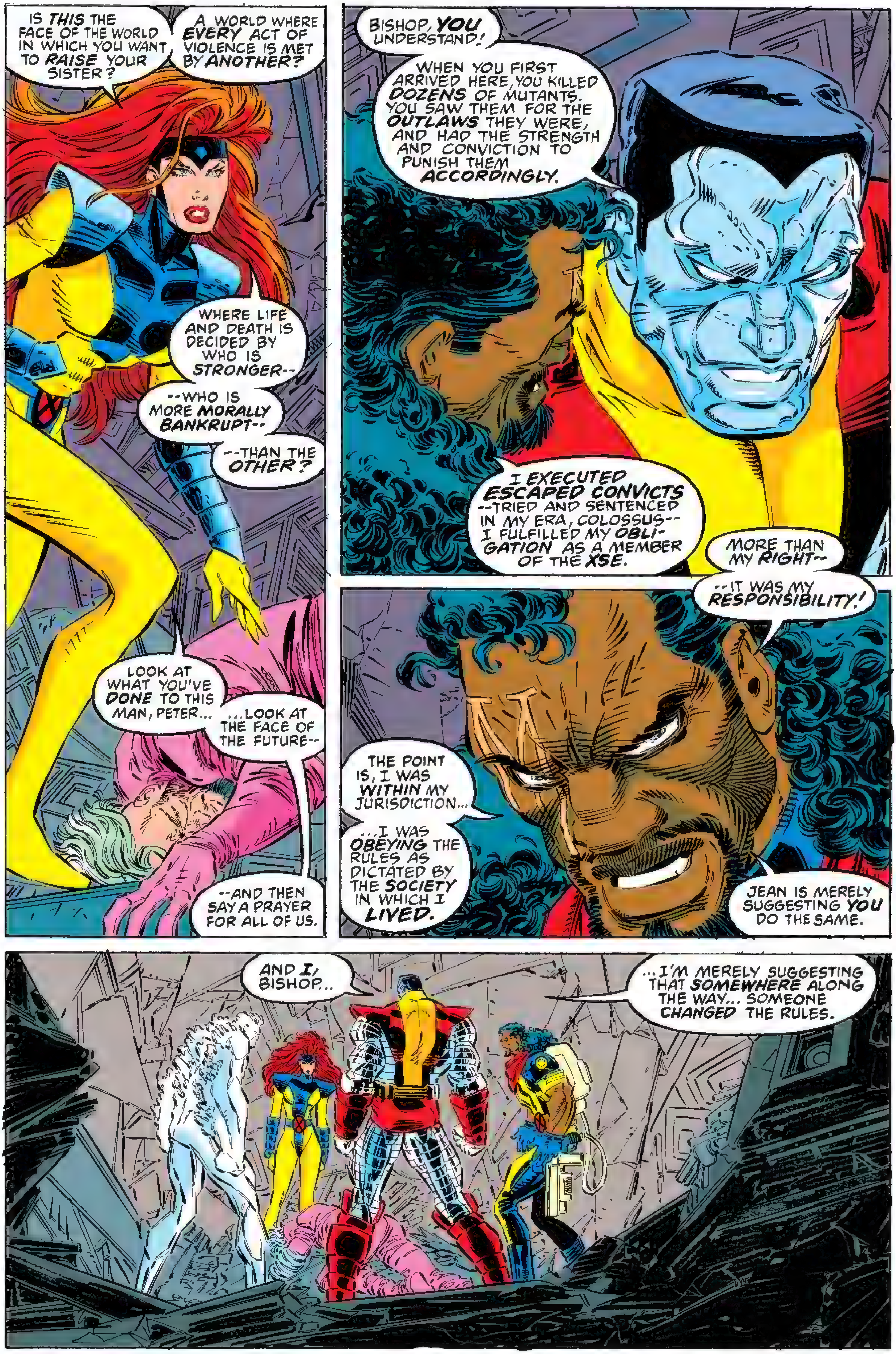

...TEMPERATURE IS A STATE OF MIND.
D-DON'T K-KILL ME, P-PLEASE!
"KILL YOU"?! FOR BEING A BARELY BRAIN-CELLED,
MORALLY CHALLENGED,
ETHNICALLY INTOLERANT,
POORLY DRESSED, BACKWARDS THINKER?
YOU PEOPLE DON'T GET A LOT OF SUPER HEROES DOWN THIS WAY, DO YOU?
UMMM, CAPTAIN AMERICA.
ONCE.
ABOUT THREE YEARS AGO.
APPARENTLY YOU DON'T GET A LOT OF RHETORICAL QUESTIONS, EITHER.
IF WE MUST, WE WILL DEFEND THESE PEOPLE DESPITE THEMSELVES.
ICEMAN, CANVAS THE IMMEDIATE AREA IN ICE!
YOU'LL FORGIVE ME IF I DON'T GO THE "GIANT BLOCK O' ICE" ROUTE.
IT'S SO... RETRO.
WEBS ARE NICE TOO.
I LOVE WEBS...

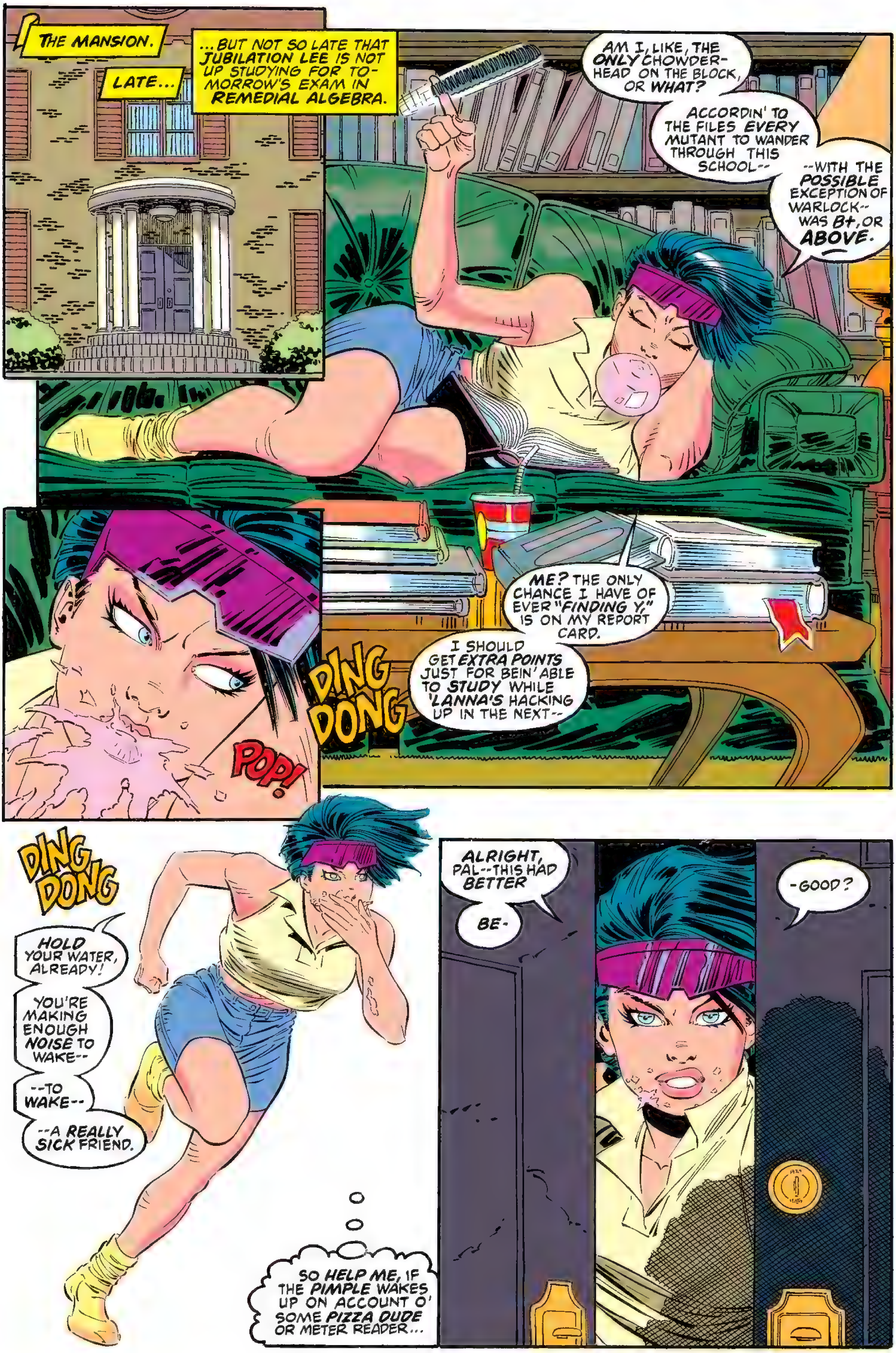

MEANWHILE...
BUT IF THIS "FITZROY" IS THE SAME PERSON THAT BROUGHT YOU BACK IN TIME, BISHOP--*
WHAT POSSIBLE VENDETTA COULD HE HAVE AGAINST ME? I DON'T EVEN KNOW THE MAN!
AS THE SON OF ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL MEMBERS OF THE HIERARCHY--
--FITZROY WAS A PSYCHOPATH, NEVER ONE GIVEN TO MOTIVATION.
FITZROY ONLY DOES WHAT HE DOES--
--BECAUSE HE CAN.
*IN UNCANNY No282. --BOB
NOT THIS TIME... AND NOT IF RAVEN HAS TO PAY THE PRICE.
BASED ON THE AMOUNT OF BLOOD SHE'S LOST, MYSTIQUE SHOULD BE DEAD.
GRAY...
AS IT IS, SHE'S STILL CONSCIOUS... HALLUCINATING...
IT MUST BE A SIDE EFFECT OF THE SAME MUTANT PHYSIOLOGY THAT ALLOWS HER TO SHAPE-SHIFT--
TALK. TALK. TALK.
HAVE YOU BEEN BAMFING WITH THE SOFTCORES FOR SO LONG, BISHOP--
--THAT YOU'VE FORGOTTEN HOW TO DANCE WITH THE ADULTS?!
YOU'VE MADE IT CLEAR THAT I'M THE ONE YOU WANT! YOU'RE WELCOME TO TAKE YOUR BEST SHOT--
--FOR WHATEVER YOUR REASONS--
--JUST LET BISHOP GET MYSTIQUE TO SAFETY!
HE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND THE CONCEPT OF COMPASSION, FORGE...
...AND ENCASED IN THAT CRYSTAL EXO-SKELETON, HE'S COMPLETELY IMPERVIOUS TO A PHYSICAL ATTACK.
WELL, THEN--
LET'S SEE WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT REMOVING IT.
JEAN--AND THE REST OF THE X-MEN!
I WOULDN'T THINK THAT WAS POSSIBLE.
THAT'S OUR JEAN--IMPOSSIBILITY IS WHAT SHE EXCELS AT!
HE IS WOUNDED, BUT STILL A THREAT.
HERE IS WHERE THAT CHANGES...

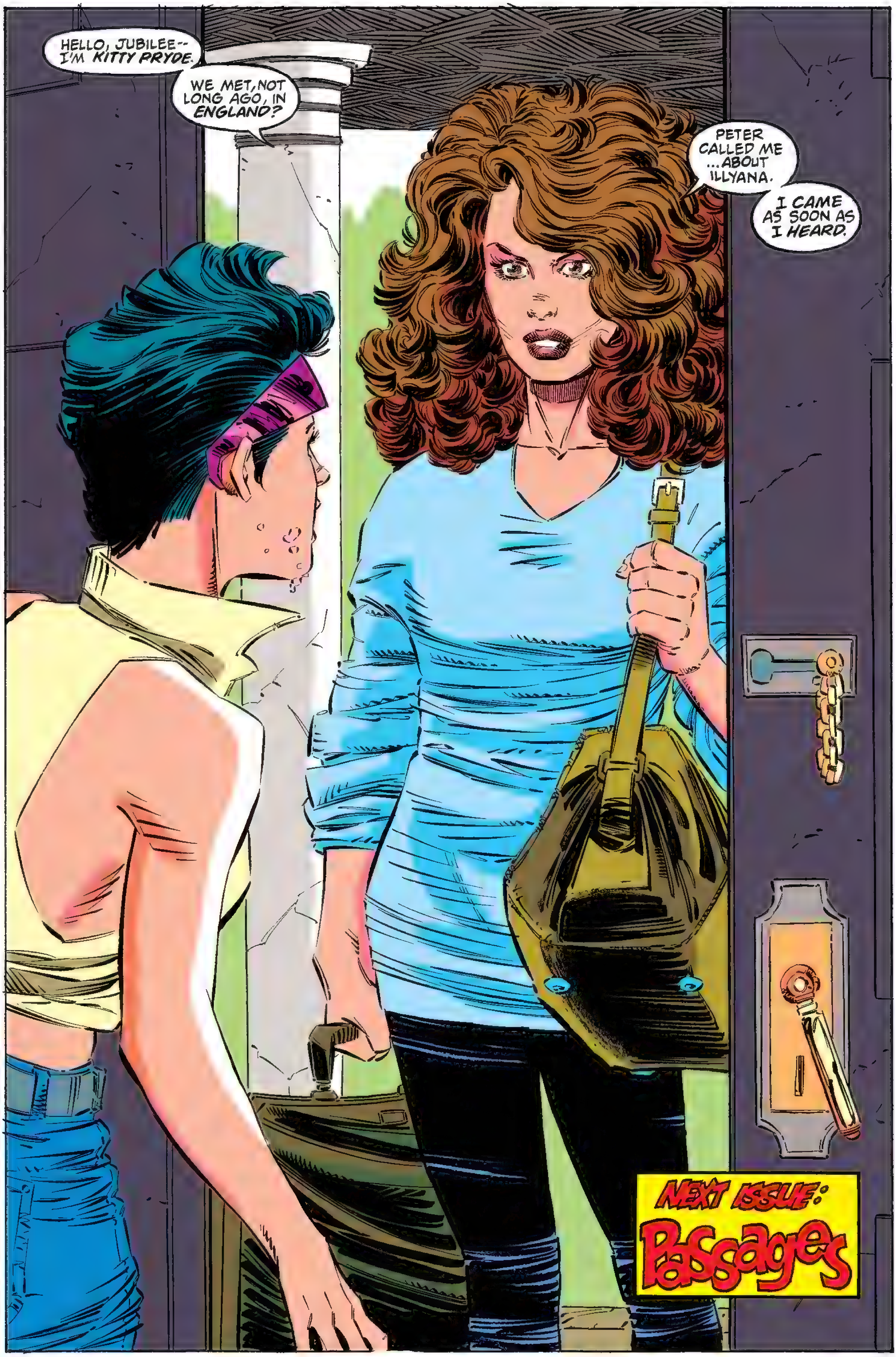

FORGE--WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT HE'S DONE--HERE OR IN THE FUTURE!
THE MAN HAS RIGHTS... AND IS ENTITLED TO THEM!
I WASN'T GOING TO KILL HIM...I WAS GOING TO SUBDUE HIM!
YOU HAVEN'T DEALT WITH FITZROY BEFORE--HIS CAPACITY FOR DECEIT IS UNLIMITED!
HE'S DISAPPEARED?!
AGK!
I PREFER THE TERM "CLOAKED..."
...AS IN, "HE CLOAKED HIMSELF LONG ENOUGH TO AMBUSH HIS OPPONENTS!"
NOW, FOR THE RECORD, JUST SO MY MOTIVATION IS NOT MISUNDERSTOOD--I'M USING MY LIFE-ABSORBING POWERS TO KILL FORGE...
...ONLY BECAUSE HE'S BEEN DESIGNATED AS THE UPSTART PRIZE CURRENTLY WORTH THE MOST POINTS.
YOU, BISHOP--QUITE LITERALLY ON THE OTHER HAND--ARE GOING TO DIE FOR THE HARDSHIP YOU PUT ME THROUGH IN THE FUTURE.


YOU WANT TO SPEAK OF HARDSHIP, TOVARISCH?!
B-KLANGG!
THEN LET'S TALK ABOUT THE PAIN AND SUFFERING ENDURED BY MY SISTER--
--WHILE WE ARE FORCED TO BATTLE YET ANOTHER THREAT TO OUR LIVES, FOR NO OTHER REASON SAVE THAT WE ARE MUTANTS!
UKlp!?
WHY IS IT SO DIFFICULT FOR YOU--
--FOR OTHERS LIKE YOU--
--TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE REST OF US WERE NOT PLACED UPON THIS EARTH FOR YOUR AMUSEMENT?!
PETER?!
RELAX, JEAN, COLOSSUS CAN TAKE CARE--
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, WARREN...
...HIS THOUGHTS ARE SO STRONG-- BREAKING THROUGH MY PSYCHIC DEFENSES!
PETER'S ANGRY, HURT...
...CONCERNED ABOUT ILLYANA. I'VE NEVER SEEN HIM-- FELT HIM-- THIS UPSET.
I'M AFRAID IN HIS CURRENT STATE OF MIND--
"--HE COULD KILL FITZROY!"
SINCE THE DAY I JOINED THE X-MEN...
...I'VE BEEN SUBJECTED TO ONE WOULD-BE MUTANT WARLORD AFTER ANOTHER!
EVERYONE FROM KRAKOA, TO PROTEUS, TO MR. SINISTER--
--EVEN PROFESSOR XAVIER IN HIS FASHION--
--HAS SOUGHT TO DICTATE HOW THE REST OF MUTANTKIND SHOULD LIVE THEIR LIVES!
I--AND MANY LIKE ME-- REFUSE TO TOLERATE YOUR PETTY AGGRESSIONS, ANYMORE!
FROM THIS DAY ONWARD--
--I SWEAR ON THE GRAVES OF MY PARENTS--
--THAT WE WILL BE FREE TO LIVE OUR OWN LIVES!
TODAY.
NOW--
--AND FOREVER!


WHOOAA, BIG GUY!
I THOUGHT I WAS THE RESIDENT HOT HEAD OF THE TEAM.
YOU'VE MADE YOUR POINT, COLOSSUS--
--KEEP IT UP, YOU'RE GOING TO DO THIS GUY PERMANENT DAMAGE.
HAVEN'T YOU LISTENED TO A WORD I SAID, WARREN?!
I HAVE SEEN ENOUGH OF MY OWN LIFE DEVASTATED OVER THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS--
--THAT I REFUSE TO STAND BY AND WATCH AS THE REST OF THE WORLD IS DESTROYED AROUND ME!
ANY MORE SO--
--THEN I'LL ALLOW ANYONE TO STOP ME!
SKRSH!
HE'S NOT WORTH THE EFFORT, PETER.
URRGHN! CALM DOWN, TIN MAN!
THAT IS ENOUGH PETER!
WE START KILLING--
--START DECIDING WHO LIVES AND WHO DIES--
--THEN WE'RE NO BETTER THAN THE PEOPLE WHO KILLED YOUR PARENTS!


IS THIS THE FACE OF THE WORLD IN WHICH YOU WANT TO RAISE YOUR SISTER?
A WORLD WHERE EVERY ACT OF VIOLENCE IS MET BY ANOTHER?
WHERE LIFE AND DEATH IS DECIDED BY WHO IS STRONGER--
--WHO IS MORE MORALLY BANKRUPT--
--THAN THE OTHER?
LOOK AT WHAT YOU'VE DONE TO THIS MAN, PETER...
...LOOK AT THE FACE OF THE FUTURE--
--AND THEN SAY A PRAYER FOR ALL OF US.
BISHOP, YOU UNDERSTAND!
WHEN YOU FIRST ARRIVED HERE, YOU KILLED DOZENS OF MUTANTS. YOU SAW THEM FOR THE OUTLAWS THEY WERE, AND HAD THE STRENGTH AND CONVICTION TO PUNISH THEM ACCORDINGLY.
I EXECUTED ESCAPED CONVICTS --TRIED AND SENTENCED IN MY ERA, COLOSSUS-- I FULFILLED MY OBLIGATION AS A MEMBER OF THE XSE.
MORE THAN MY RIGHT--
--IT WAS MY RESPONSIBILITY!
THE POINT IS, I WAS WITHIN MY JURISDICTION...
...I WAS OBEYING THE RULES AS DICTATED BY THE SOCIETY IN WHICH I LIVED.
JEAN IS MERELY SUGGESTING YOU DO THE SAME.
AND I, BISHOP...
...I'M MERELY SUGGESTING THAT SOMEWHERE ALONG THE WAY... SOMEONE CHANGED THE RULES.


THE MANSION.
LATE...
...BUT NOT SO LATE THAT JUBILATION LEE IS NOT UP STUDYING FOR TOMORROW'S EXAM IN REMEDIAL ALGEBRA.
AM I, LIKE, THE ONLY CHOWDERHEAD ON THE BLOCK, OR WHAT?
ACCORDIN' TO THE FILES EVERY MUTANT TO WANDER THROUGH THIS SCHOOL--
--WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF WARLOCK--WAS B+, OR ABOVE.
ME? THE ONLY CHANCE I HAVE OF EVER "FINDING Y," IS ON MY REPORT CARD.
I SHOULD GET EXTRA POINTS JUST FOR BEIN' ABLE TO STUDY WHILE 'LANNA'S HACKING UP IN THE NEXT--
DING DONG
POP!
DING DONG
HOLD YOUR WATER, ALREADY!
YOU'RE MAKING ENOUGH NOISE TO WAKE--
--TO WAKE--
--A REALLY SICK FRIEND.
SO HELP ME, IF THE PIMPLE WAKES UP ON ACCOUNT O' SOME PIZZA DUDE OR METER READER...
ALRIGHT, PAL--THIS HAD BETTER
BE-
-GOOD?


HELLO, JUBILEE-- I'M KITTY PRYDE.
WE MET, NOT LONG AGO, IN ENGLAND?
PETER CALLED ME ...ABOUT ILLYANA.
I CAME AS SOON AS I HEARD.
NEXT ISSUE: Passages

MARVEL COMICS
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THE UNCANNY
X-MEN
$1.25 US
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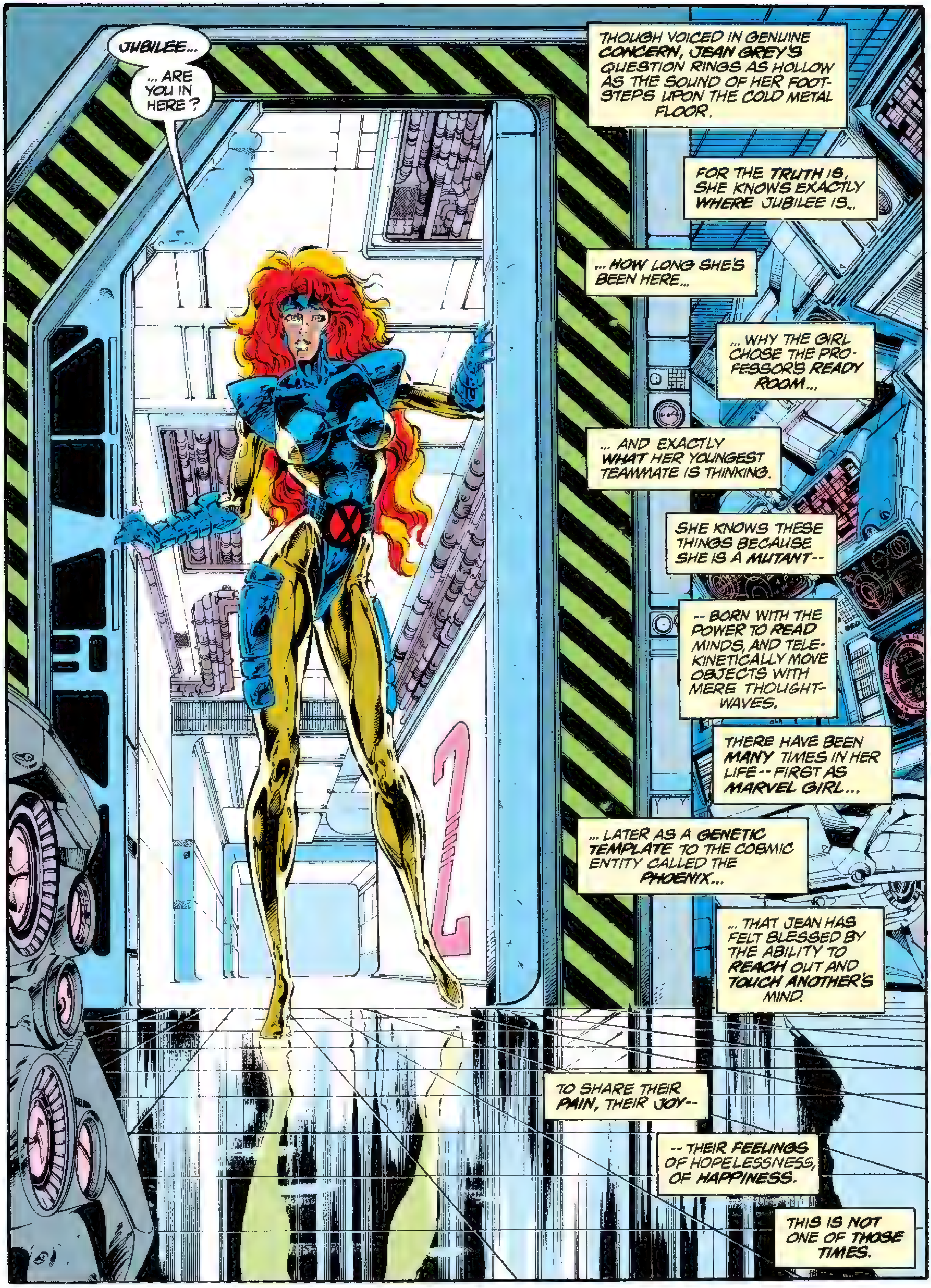
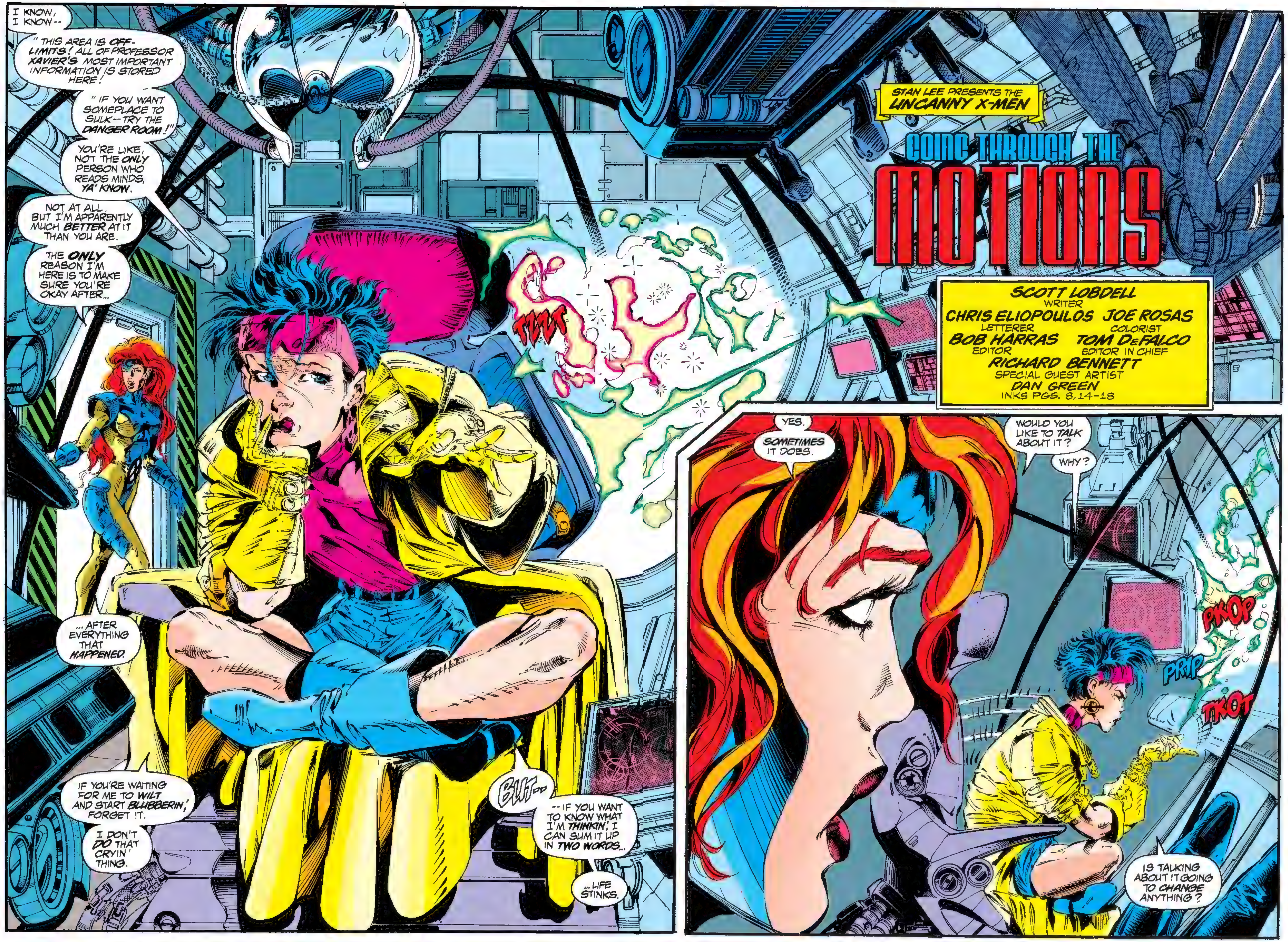
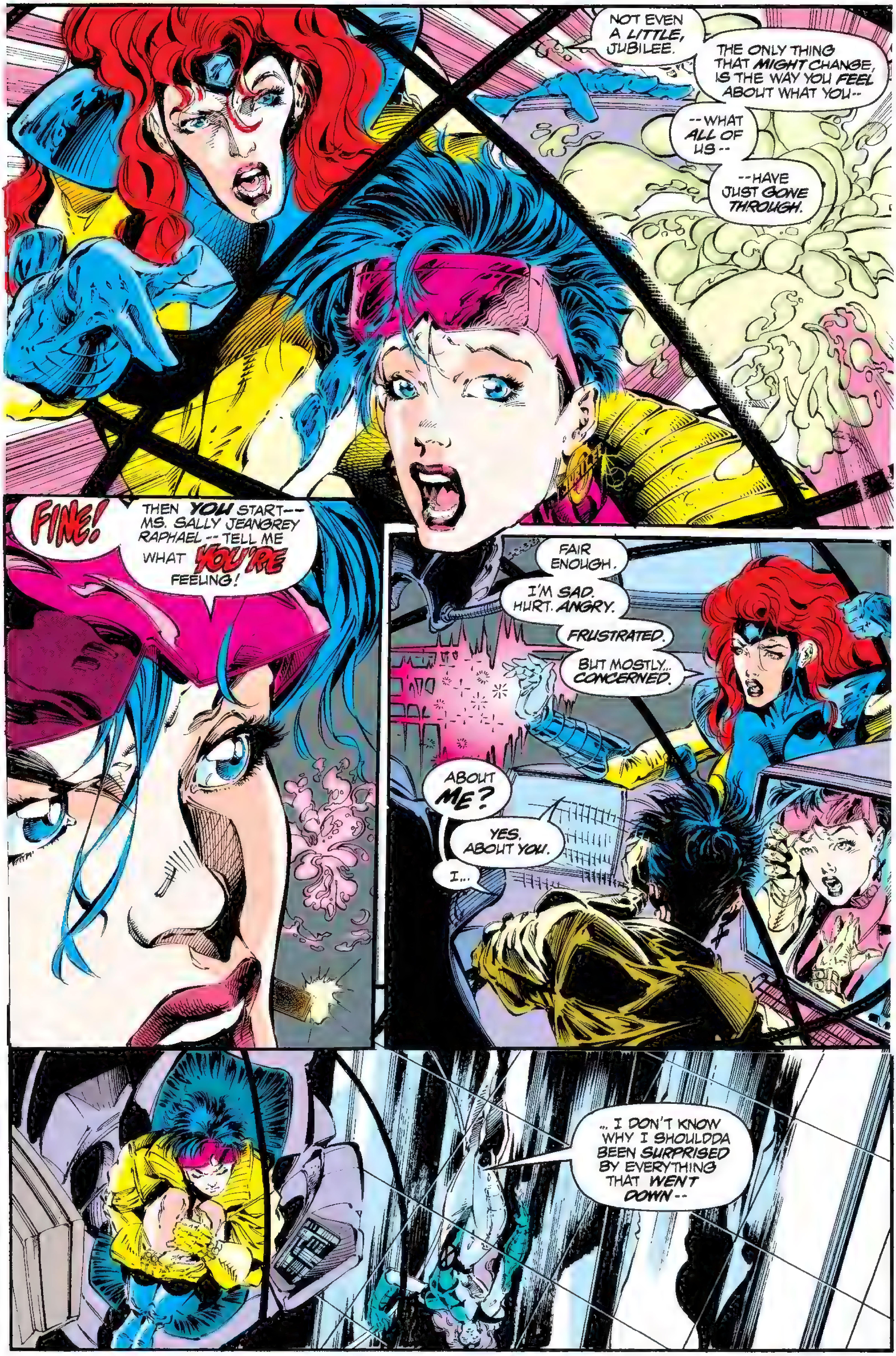
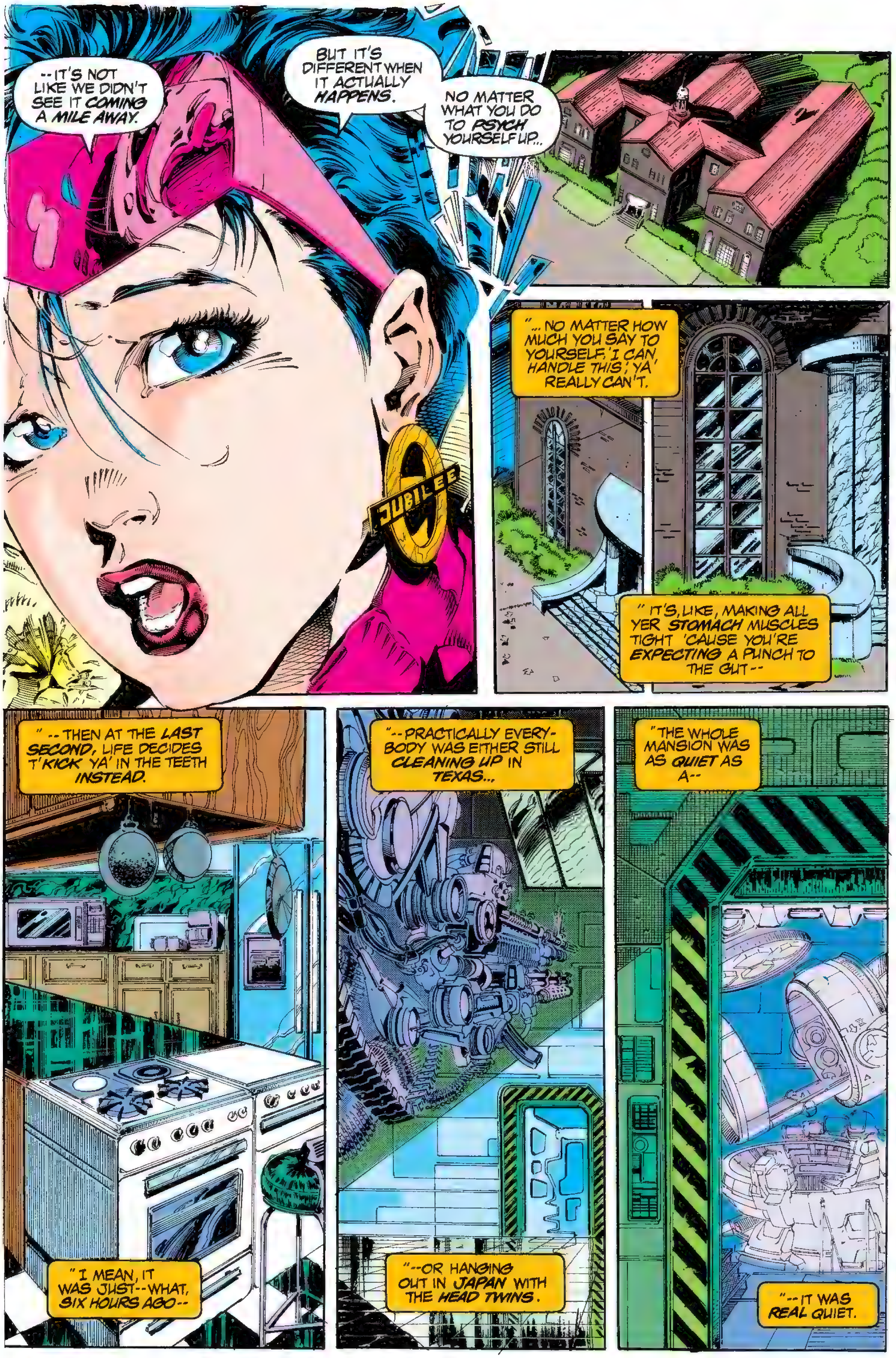
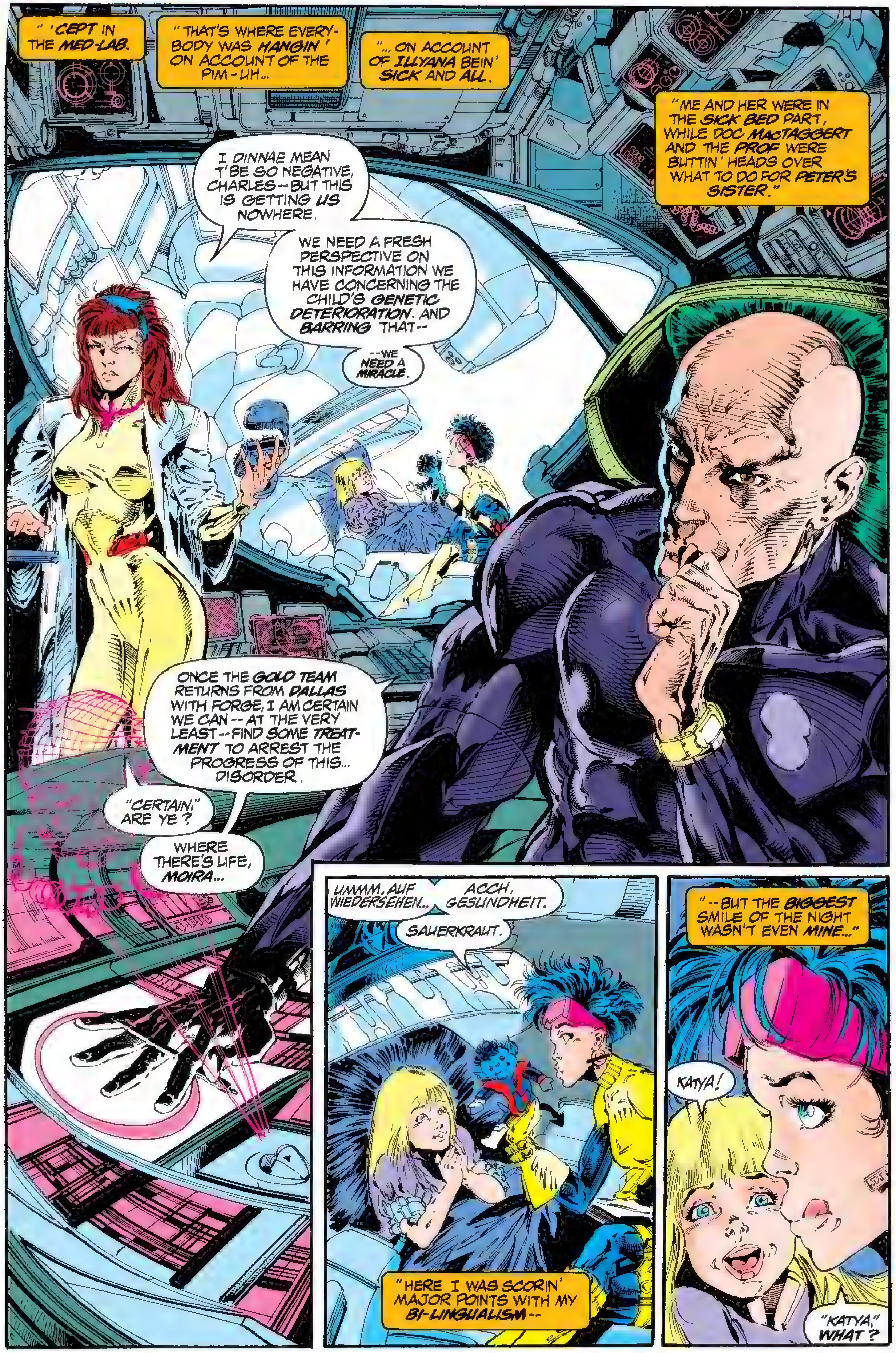
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
IF YOU READ ONLY ONE X-TITLE THIS MONTH-- THIS ISSUE MUST BE IT!

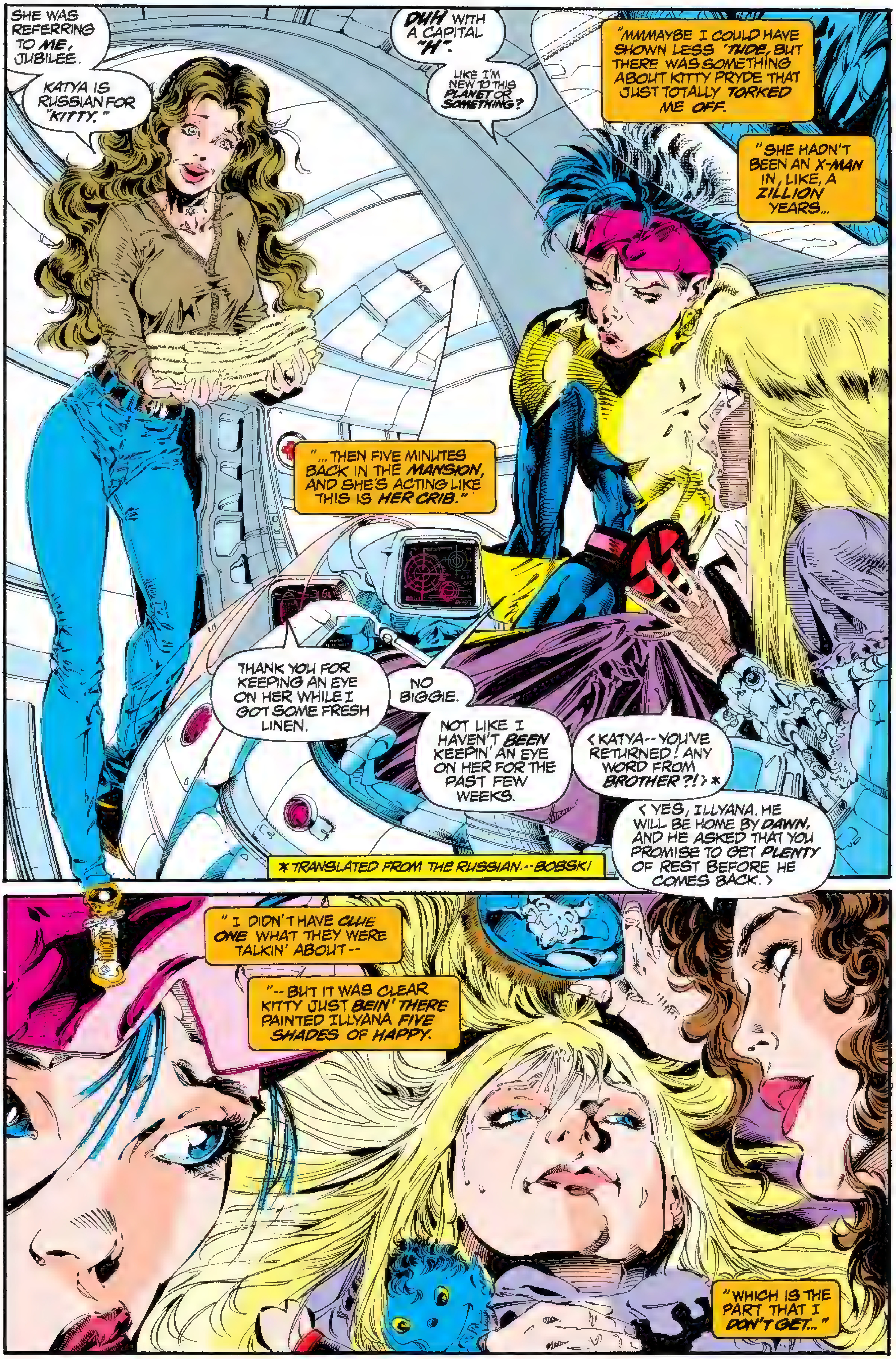

JUBILEE...
... ARE YOU IN HERE?
THOUGH VOICED IN GENUINE CONCERN, JEAN GREY'S QUESTION RINGS AS HOLLOW AS THE SOUND OF HER FOOTSTEPS UPON THE COLD METAL FLOOR.
FOR THE TRUTH IS, SHE KNOWS EXACTLY WHERE JUBILEE IS...
... HOW LONG SHE'S BEEN HERE...
... WHY THE GIRL CHOSE THE PROFESSOR'S READY ROOM...
... AND EXACTLY WHAT HER YOUNGEST TEAMMATE IS THINKING.
SHE KNOWS THESE THINGS BECAUSE SHE IS A MUTANT--
-- BORN WITH THE POWER TO READ MINDS, AND TELEKINETICALLY MOVE OBJECTS WITH MERE THOUGHT-WAVES.
THERE HAVE BEEN MANY TIMES IN HER LIFE -- FIRST AS MARVEL GIRL...
... LATER AS A GENETIC TEMPLATE TO THE COSMIC ENTITY CALLED THE PHOENIX...
... THAT JEAN HAS FELT BLESSED BY THE ABILITY TO REACH OUT AND TOUCH ANOTHER'S MIND.
TO SHARE THEIR PAIN, THEIR JOY--
-- THEIR FEELINGS OF HOPELESSNESS, OF HAPPINESS.
THIS IS NOT ONE OF THOSE TIMES.

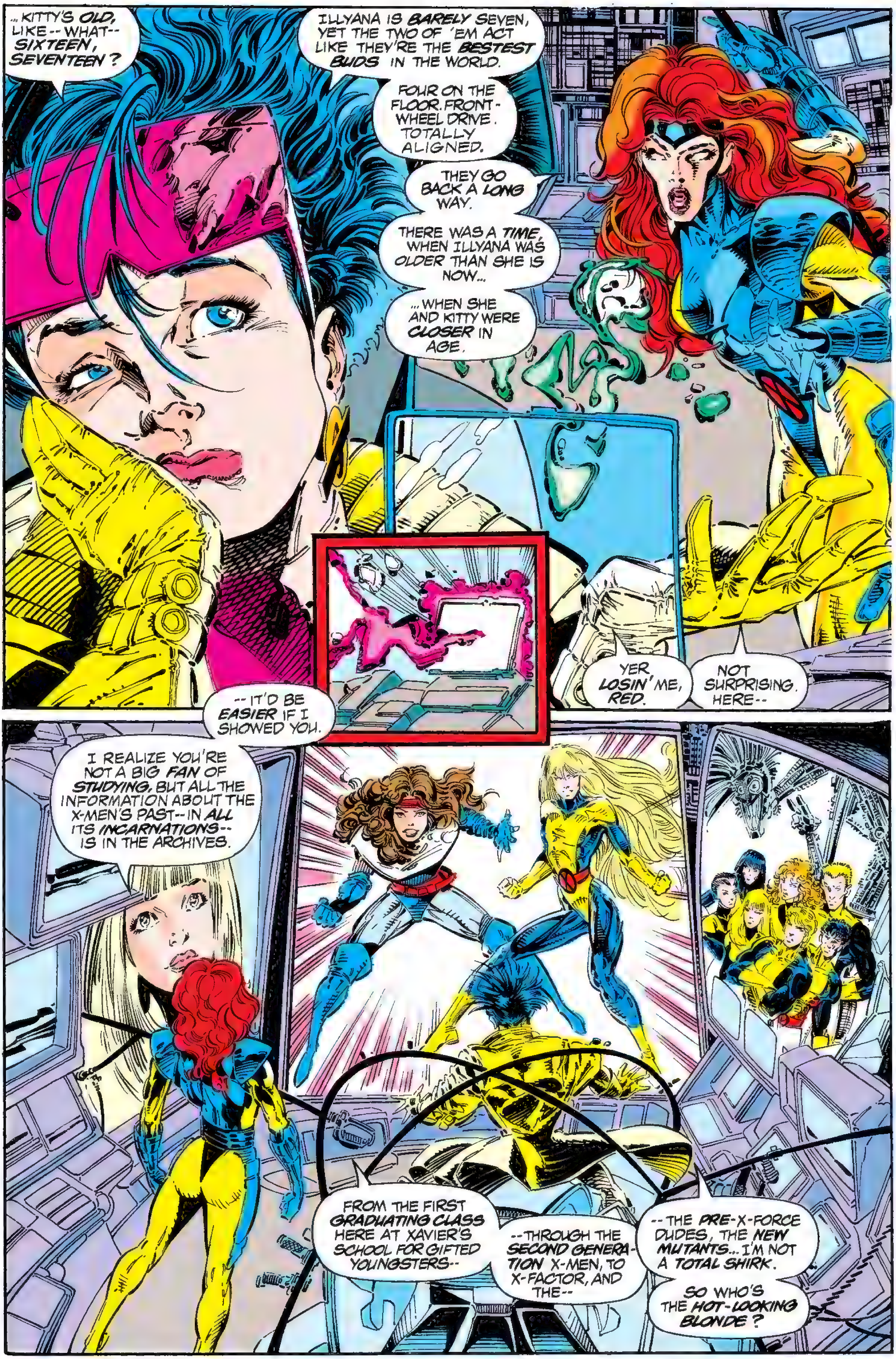

I KNOW, I KNOW--
"THIS AREA IS OFF-LIMITS! ALL OF PROFESSOR XAVIER'S MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION IS STORED HERE!
"IF YOU WANT SOMEPLACE TO SULK--TRY THE DANGER ROOM!"
YOU'RE LIKE, NOT THE ONLY PERSON WHO READS MINDS, YA' KNOW.
NOT AT ALL. BUT I'M APPARENTLY MUCH BETTER AT IT THAN YOU ARE.
THE ONLY REASON I'M HERE IS TO MAKE SURE YOU'RE OKAY AFTER...
...AFTER EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED.
IF YOU'RE WAITING FOR ME TO WILT AND START BLUBBERIN,' FORGET IT.
I DON'T DO THAT CRYIN' THING.
TZZZT
BUT--
--IF YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT I'M THINKIN,' I CAN SUM IT UP IN TWO WORDS...
...LIFE STINKS.
STAN LEE PRESENTS THE UNCANNY X-MEN
GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS
SCOTT LOBDELL WRITER
CHRIS ELIOPOULOS LETTERER
JOE ROSAS COLORIST
BOB HARRAS EDITOR
TOM DEFALCO EDITOR IN CHIEF
RICHARD BENNETT SPECIAL GUEST ARTIST
DAN GREEN INKS PGS. 8, 14-18
WOULD YOU LIKE TO TALK ABOUT IT?
WHY?
IS TALKING ABOUT IT GOING TO CHANGE ANYTHING?
YES. SOMETIMES IT DOES.
PKOP
PRIP
TKOT

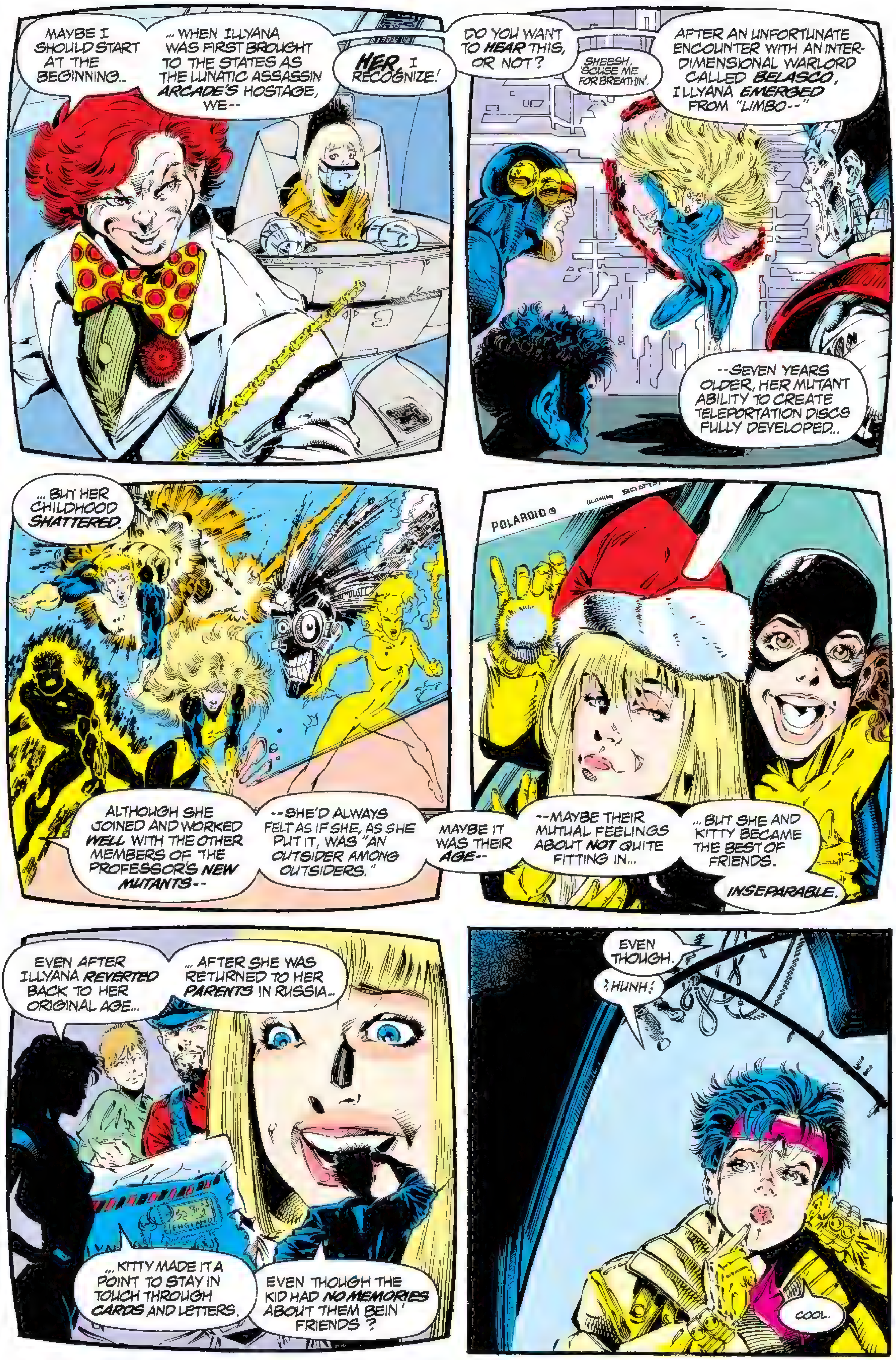

NOT EVEN A *LITTLE*, JUBILEE.
THE ONLY THING THAT *MIGHT* CHANGE, IS THE WAY YOU *FEEL* ABOUT WHAT YOU--
--WHAT *ALL* OF US--
--HAVE JUST *GONE THROUGH*.
FINE!
THEN *YOU* START--- MS. SALLY JEANGREY RAPHAEL -- TELL ME WHAT *YOU'RE* FEELING!
FAIR ENOUGH.
I'M *SAD*. HURT. *ANGRY*.
FRUSTRATED.
BUT MOSTLY... *CONCERNED*.
ABOUT *ME?*
YES, ABOUT YOU.
I...
... I DON'T KNOW WHY I SHOULDDA BEEN *SURPRISED* BY EVERYTHING THAT *WENT DOWN*--

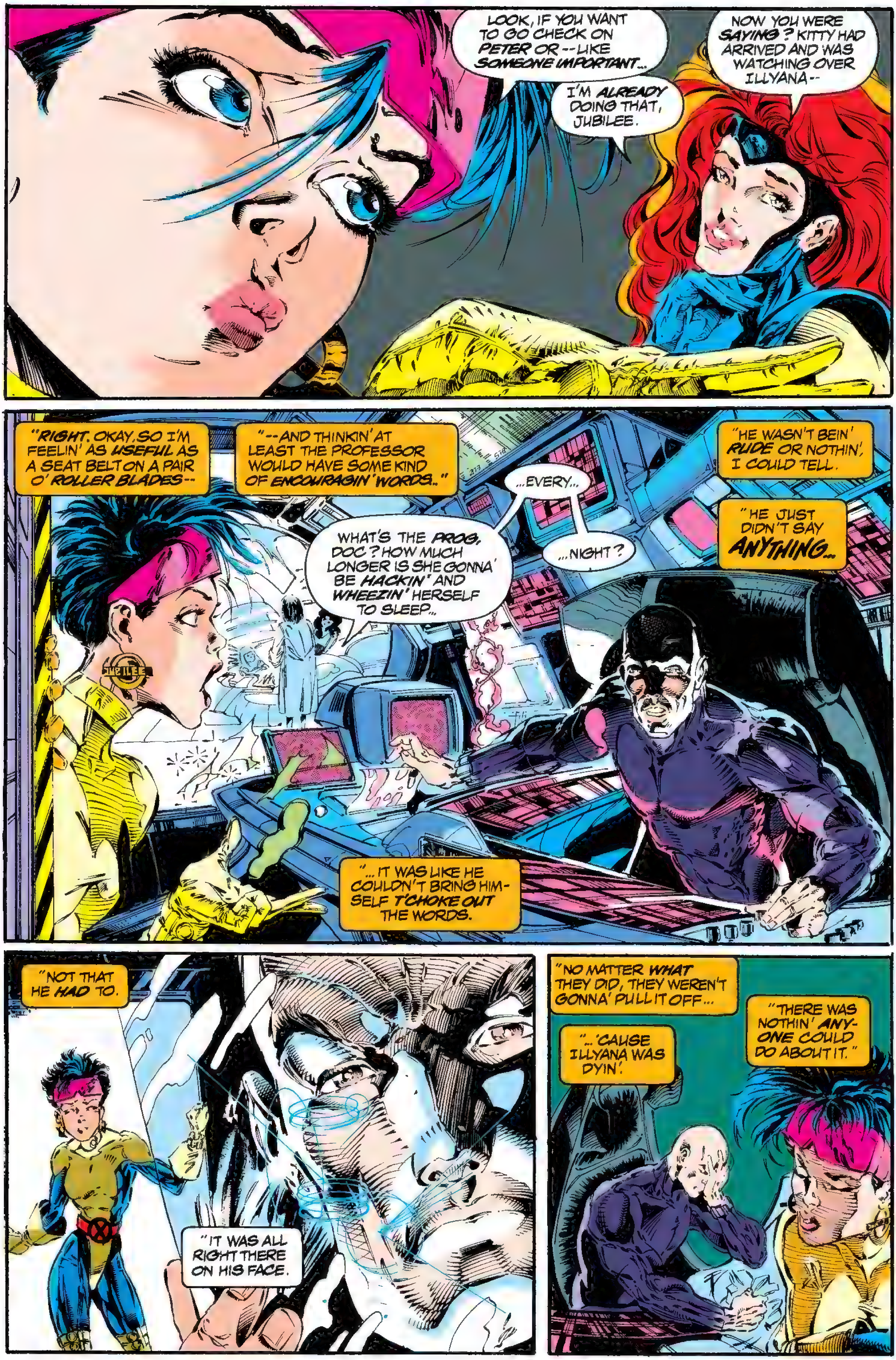

--IT'S NOT LIKE WE DIDN'T SEE IT *COMING* A *MILE AWAY.*
BUT IT'S DIFFERENT WHEN IT ACTUALLY *HAPPENS.*
NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO TO *PSYCH* YOURSELF UP...
"...NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU SAY TO YOURSELF, '*I CAN HANDLE THIS*,' YA' REALLY CAN'T.
JUBILEE
"IT'S, LIKE, MAKING ALL YER *STOMACH* MUSCLES TIGHT 'CAUSE YOU'RE *EXPECTING* A PUNCH TO THE GUT--
"--THEN AT THE *LAST SECOND*, LIFE DECIDES T'*KICK* YA' IN THE TEETH *INSTEAD*.
"I MEAN, IT WAS JUST--WHAT, *SIX HOURS AGO*--
"--PRACTICALLY EVERYBODY WAS EITHER STILL *CLEANING UP* IN *TEXAS*...
"--OR HANGING OUT IN *JAPAN* WITH THE *HEAD TWINS*.
"THE WHOLE MANSION WAS AS *QUIET* AS A--
"--IT WAS *REAL* QUIET.

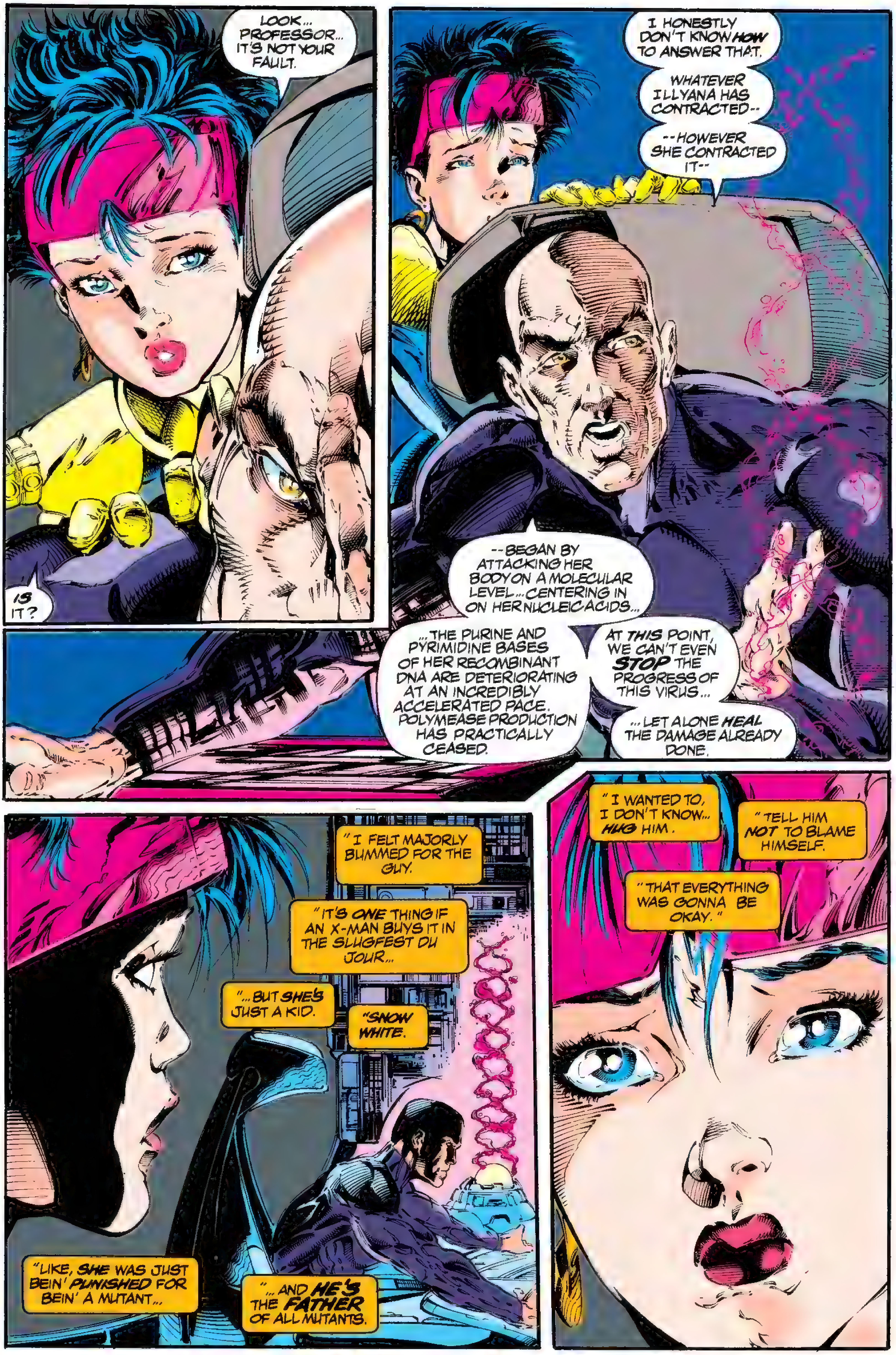

" 'CEPT IN THE MED-LAB.
" THAT'S WHERE EVERYBODY WAS HANGIN' ON ACCOUNT OF THE PIM-UH...
"... ON ACCOUNT OF ILLYANA BEIN' SICK AND ALL.
"ME AND HER WERE IN THE SICK BED PART, WHILE DOC MacTAGGERT AND THE PROF WERE BUTTIN' HEADS OVER WHAT TO DO FOR PETER'S SISTER."
I DINNAE MEAN T'BE SO NEGATIVE, CHARLES--BUT THIS IS GETTING US NOWHERE.
WE NEED A FRESH PERSPECTIVE ON THIS INFORMATION WE HAVE CONCERNING THE CHILD'S GENETIC DETERIORATION. AND BARRING THAT--
--WE NEED A MIRACLE.
ONCE THE GOLD TEAM RETURNS FROM DALLAS WITH FORGE, I AM CERTAIN WE CAN -- AT THE VERY LEAST -- FIND SOME TREATMENT TO ARREST THE PROGRESS OF THIS... DISORDER.
"CERTAIN," ARE YE?
WHERE THERE'S LIFE, MOIRA...
UMMM, AUF WIEDERSEHEN...
ACCH, GESUNDHEIT.
SAUERKRAUT.
"HERE I WAS SCORIN' MAJOR POINTS WITH MY BI-LINGUALISM--
"--BUT THE BIGGEST SMILE OF THE NIGHT WASN'T EVEN MINE..."
KATYA!
"KATYA," WHAT?

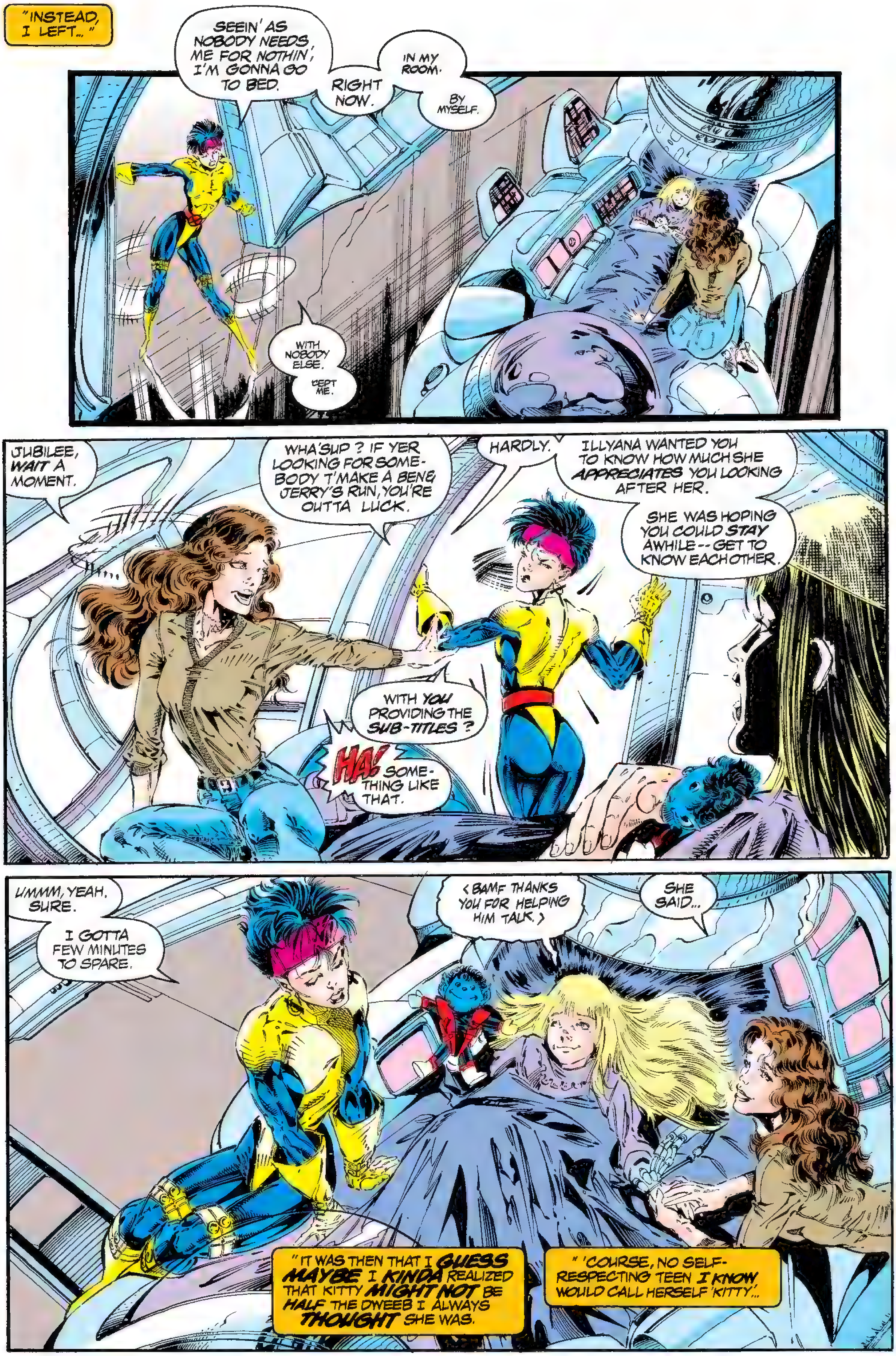

SHE WAS REFERRING TO *ME*, JUBILEE.
KATYA IS RUSSIAN FOR "*KITTY*."
DUH WITH A CAPITAL "*H*".
LIKE I'M NEW TO THIS *PLANET* OR *SOMETHING*?
"MMMAYBE I COULD HAVE SHOWN LESS '*TUDE*, BUT THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT KITTY PRYDE THAT JUST TOTALLY *TORKED* ME *OFF*.
"SHE HADN'T BEEN AN *X-MAN* IN, LIKE, A *ZILLION* YEARS...
"...THEN FIVE MINUTES BACK IN THE *MANSION*, AND SHE'S ACTING LIKE THIS IS *HER CRIB*."
THANK YOU FOR KEEPING AN EYE ON HER WHILE I GOT SOME FRESH LINEN.
NO BIGGIE.
NOT LIKE I HAVEN'T *BEEN* KEEPIN' AN EYE ON HER FOR THE PAST FEW WEEKS.
‹KATYA--YOU'VE RETURNED! ANY WORD FROM *BROTHER*?!› *
‹YES, ILLYANA. HE WILL BE HOME BY *DAWN*, AND HE ASKED THAT YOU PROMISE TO GET *PLENTY* OF REST BEFORE HE COMES BACK.›
* *TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN.--BOBSKI*
"I DIDN'T HAVE *CLUE ONE* WHAT THEY WERE TALKIN' ABOUT--
"--BUT IT WAS CLEAR KITTY JUST *BEIN' THERE* PAINTED ILLYANA *FIVE SHADES OF HAPPY*.
"WHICH IS THE PART THAT I *DON'T GET*..."

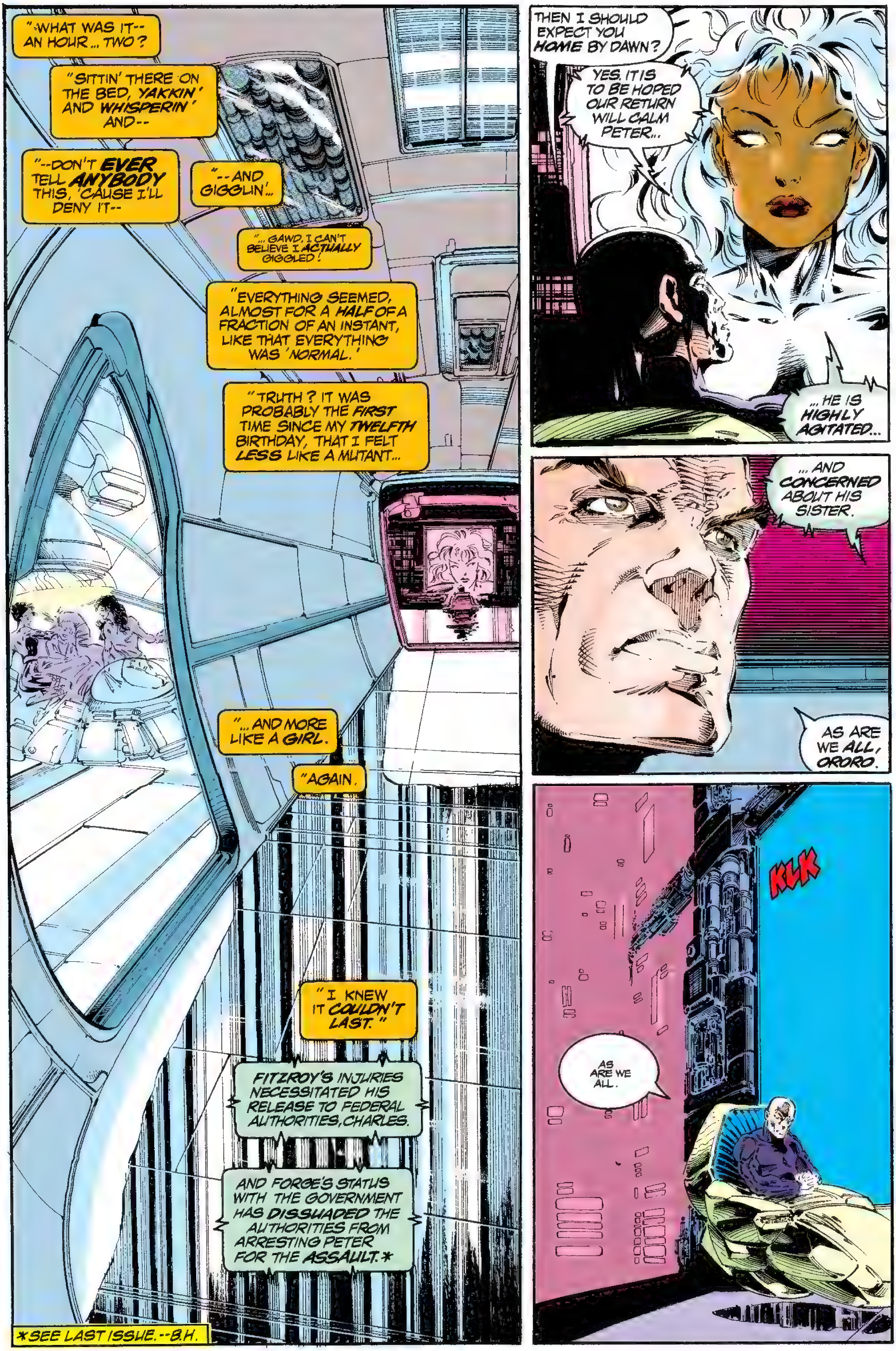

...KITTY'S OLD, LIKE--WHAT--SIXTEEN, SEVENTEEN?
ILLYANA IS BARELY SEVEN, YET THE TWO OF 'EM ACT LIKE THEY'RE THE BESTEST BUDS IN THE WORLD.
FOUR ON THE FLOOR. FRONT-WHEEL DRIVE. TOTALLY ALIGNED.
THEY GO BACK A LONG WAY.
THERE WAS A TIME, WHEN ILLYANA WAS OLDER THAN SHE IS NOW...
...WHEN SHE AND KITTY WERE CLOSER IN AGE.
YER LOSIN' ME, RED.
NOT SURPRISING. HERE--
--IT'D BE EASIER IF I SHOWED YOU.
I REALIZE YOU'RE NOT A BIG FAN OF STUDYING, BUT ALL THE INFORMATION ABOUT THE X-MEN'S PAST--IN ALL ITS INCARNATIONS--IS IN THE ARCHIVES.
FROM THE FIRST GRADUATING CLASS HERE AT XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS--
--THROUGH THE SECOND GENERATION X-MEN, TO X-FACTOR, AND THE--
--THE PRE-X-FORCE DUDES, THE NEW MUTANTS... I'M NOT A TOTAL SHIRK.
SO WHO'S THE HOT-LOOKING BLONDE?

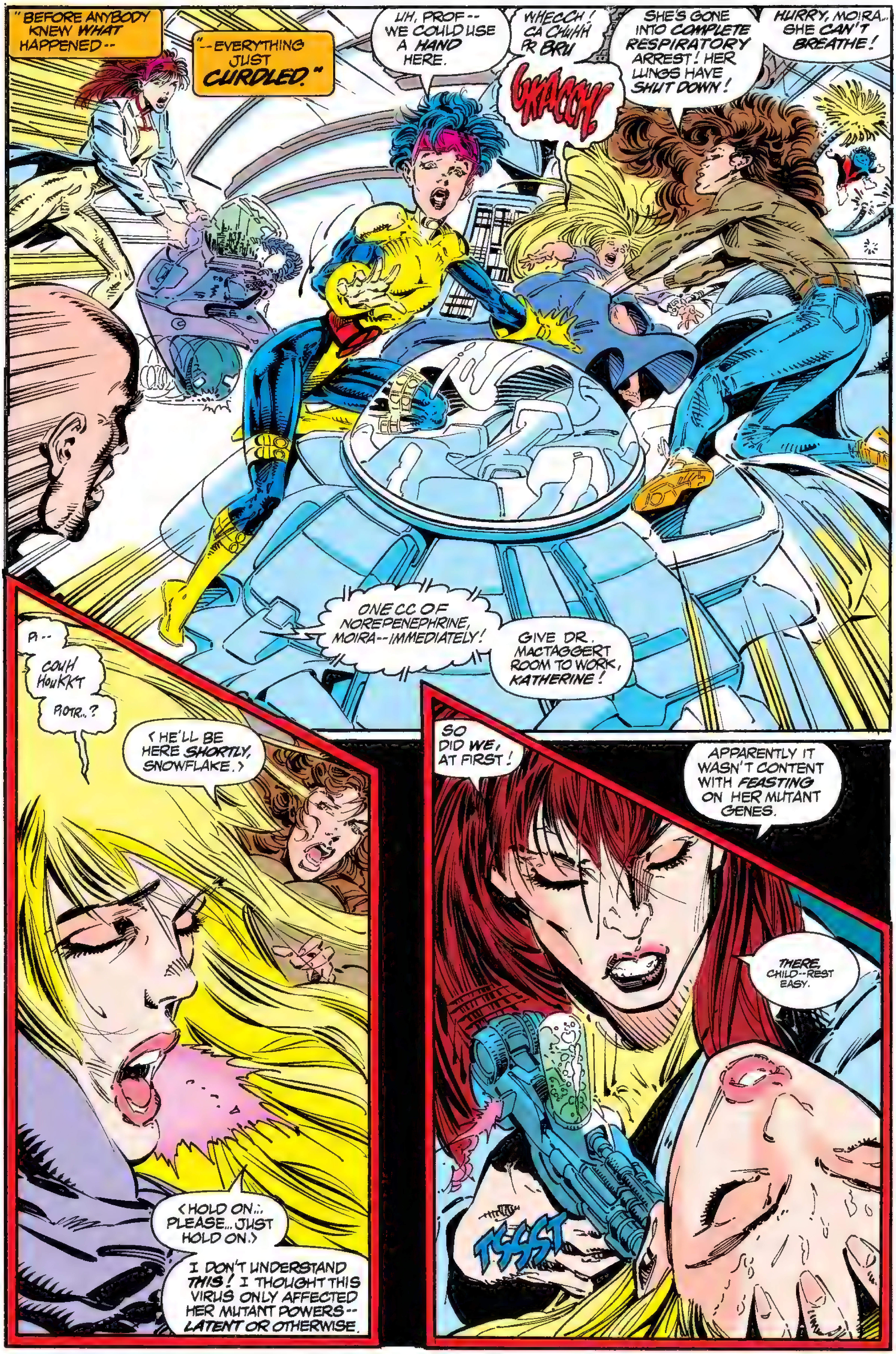

MAYBE I SHOULD START AT THE BEGINNING..
...WHEN ILLYANA WAS FIRST BROUGHT TO THE STATES AS THE LUNATIC ASSASSIN ARCADE'S HOSTAGE, WE--
HER, I RECOGNIZE!
DO YOU WANT TO HEAR THIS, OR NOT?
SHEESH. 'SCUSE ME FOR BREATHIN'.
AFTER AN UNFORTUNATE ENCOUNTER WITH AN INTER-DIMENSIONAL WARLORD CALLED BELASCO, ILLYANA EMERGED FROM "LIMBO--"
--SEVEN YEARS OLDER, HER MUTANT ABILITY TO CREATE TELEPORTATION DISCS FULLY DEVELOPED..
...BUT HER CHILDHOOD SHATTERED.
ALTHOUGH SHE JOINED AND WORKED WELL WITH THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE PROFESSOR'S NEW MUTANTS--
--SHE'D ALWAYS FELT AS IF SHE, AS SHE PUT IT, WAS "AN OUTSIDER AMONG OUTSIDERS."
POLAROID®
MAYBE IT WAS THEIR AGE--
--MAYBE THEIR MUTUAL FEELINGS ABOUT NOT QUITE FITTING IN...
...BUT SHE AND KITTY BECAME THE BEST OF FRIENDS.
INSEPARABLE.
EVEN AFTER ILLYANA REVERTED BACK TO HER ORIGINAL AGE...
...AFTER SHE WAS RETURNED TO HER PARENTS IN RUSSIA..
ENGLAND
...KITTY MADE IT A POINT TO STAY IN TOUCH THROUGH CARDS AND LETTERS.
EVEN THOUGH THE KID HAD NO MEMORIES ABOUT THEM BEIN' FRIENDS?
EVEN THOUGH.
HUNH
COOL.

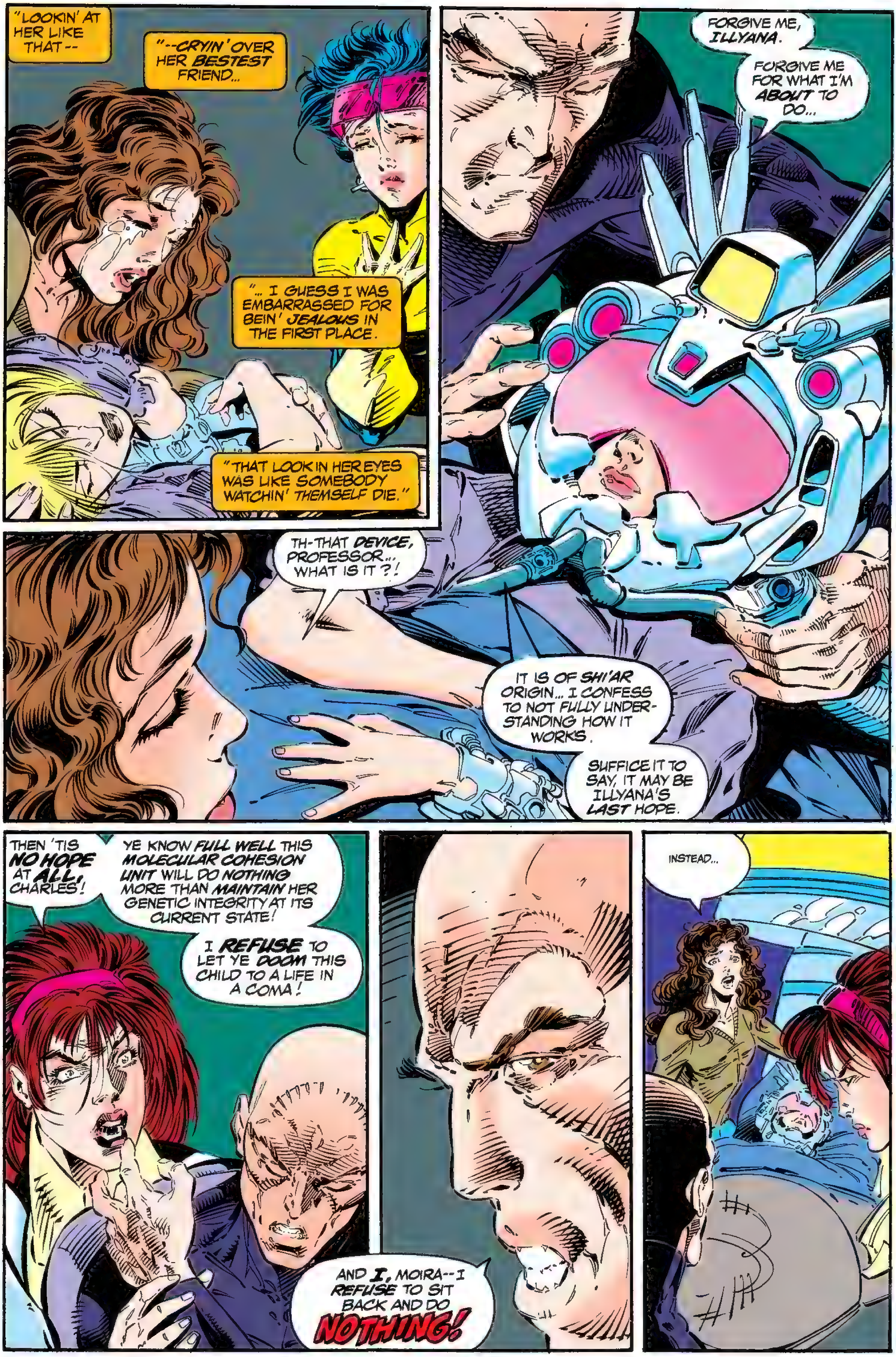

LOOK, IF YOU WANT TO GO CHECK ON PETER OR -- LIKE SOMEONE IMPORTANT...
I'M ALREADY DOING THAT, JUBILEE.
NOW YOU WERE SAYING? KITTY HAD ARRIVED AND WAS WATCHING OVER ILLYANA --
"RIGHT. OKAY. SO I'M FEELIN' AS USEFUL AS A SEAT BELT ON A PAIR O' ROLLER BLADES --
"-- AND THINKIN' AT LEAST THE PROFESSOR WOULD HAVE SOME KIND OF ENCOURAGIN' WORDS.."
WHAT'S THE PROG, DOC? HOW MUCH LONGER IS SHE GONNA' BE HACKIN' AND WHEEZIN' HERSELF TO SLEEP..
...EVERY...
...NIGHT?
"HE WASN'T BEIN' RUDE OR NOTHIN', I COULD TELL.
"HE JUST DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING...
"... IT WAS LIKE HE COULDN'T BRING HIMSELF T'CHOKE OUT THE WORDS.
JUBILEE
"NOT THAT HE HAD TO.
"IT WAS ALL RIGHT THERE ON HIS FACE.
"NO MATTER WHAT THEY DID, THEY WEREN'T GONNA' PULL IT OFF...
"... 'CAUSE ILLYANA WAS DYIN'.
"THERE WAS NOTHIN' ANYONE COULD DO ABOUT IT."

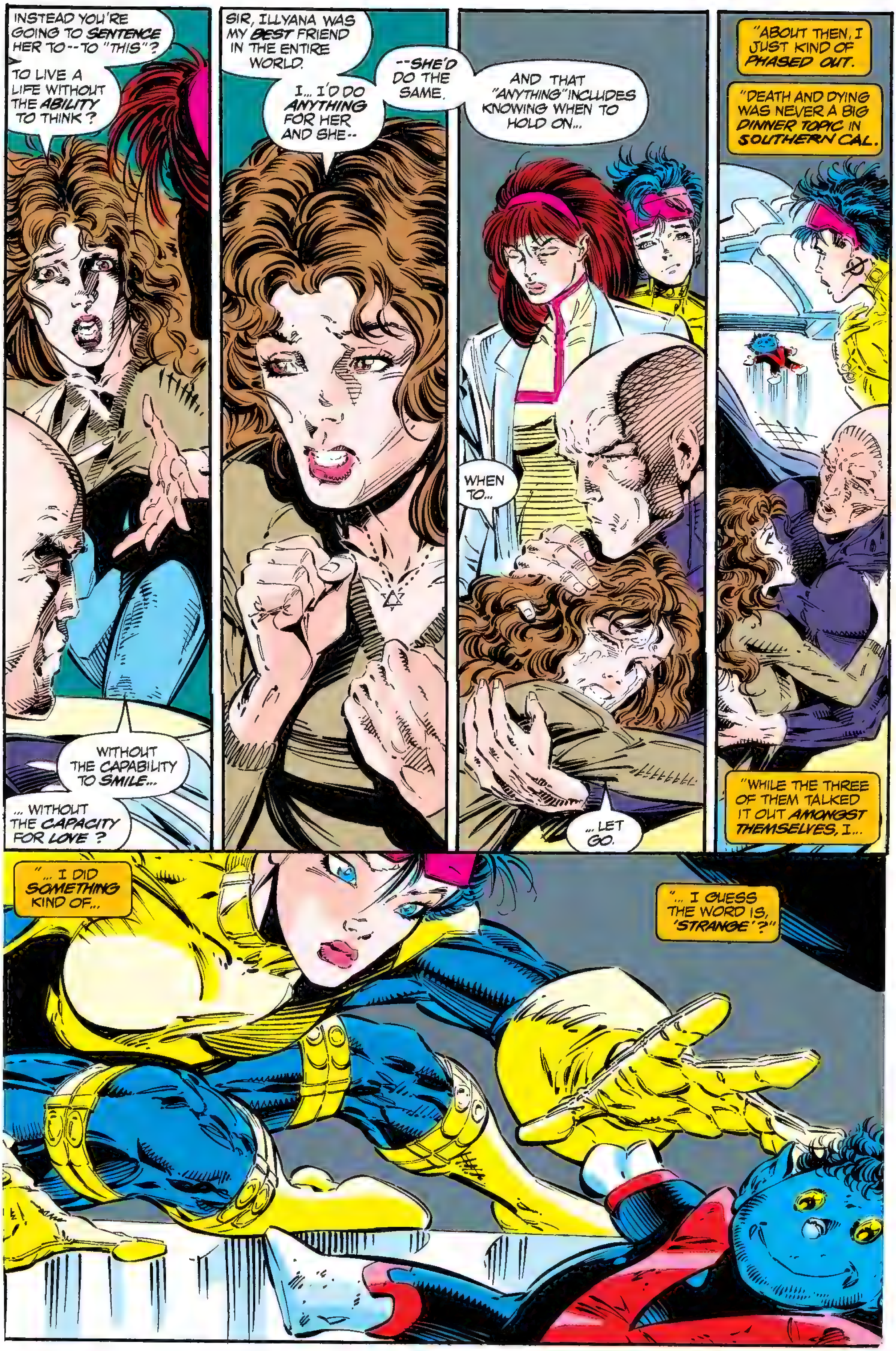

LOOK... PROFESSOR... IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT.
IS IT?
I HONESTLY DON'T KNOW HOW TO ANSWER THAT.
WHATEVER ILLYANA HAS CONTRACTED--
--HOWEVER SHE CONTRACTED IT--
--BEGAN BY ATTACKING HER BODY ON A MOLECULAR LEVEL...CENTERING IN ON HER NUCLEIC ACIDS...
...THE PURINE AND PYRIMIDINE BASES OF HER RECOMBINANT DNA ARE DETERIORATING AT AN INCREDIBLY ACCELERATED PACE. POLYMEASE PRODUCTION HAS PRACTICALLY CEASED.
AT THIS POINT, WE CAN'T EVEN STOP THE PROGRESS OF THIS VIRUS...
...LET ALONE HEAL THE DAMAGE ALREADY DONE.
"I FELT MAJORLY BUMMED FOR THE GUY.
"IT'S ONE THING IF AN X-MAN BUYS IT IN THE SLUGFEST DU JOUR...
"...BUT SHE'S JUST A KID.
"SNOW WHITE.
"LIKE, SHE WAS JUST BEIN' PUNISHED FOR BEIN' A MUTANT...
"...AND HE'S THE FATHER OF ALL MUTANTS.
"I WANTED TO, I DON'T KNOW... HUG HIM.
"TELL HIM NOT TO BLAME HIMSELF.
"THAT EVERYTHING WAS GONNA BE OKAY."

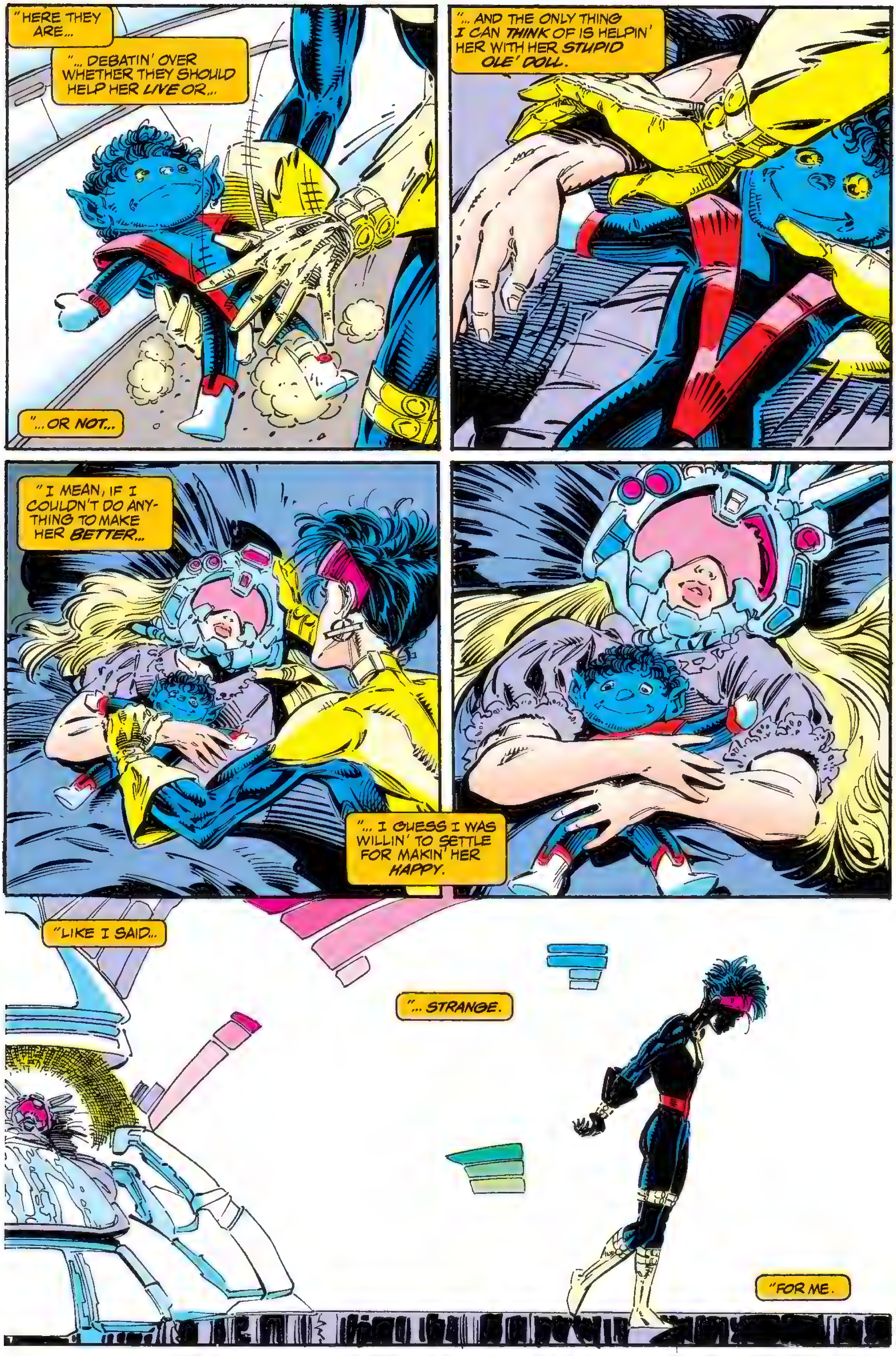

"INSTEAD, I LEFT..."
SEEIN' AS NOBODY NEEDS ME FOR NOTHIN', I'M GONNA GO TO BED.
RIGHT NOW.
IN MY ROOM.
BY MYSELF.
WITH NOBODY ELSE.
'CEPT ME.
JUBILEE, WAIT A MOMENT.
WHA'SUP ? IF YER LOOKING FOR SOMEBODY T'MAKE A BEN & JERRY'S RUN, YOU'RE OUTTA LUCK.
HARDLY.
ILLYANA WANTED YOU TO KNOW HOW MUCH SHE APPRECIATES YOU LOOKING AFTER HER.
SHE WAS HOPING YOU COULD STAY AWHILE -- GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER.
WITH YOU PROVIDING THE SUB-TITLES ?
HA! SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
UMMM, YEAH, SURE.
I GOTTA FEW MINUTES TO SPARE.
< BAMF THANKS YOU FOR HELPING HIM TALK. >
SHE SAID...
"IT WAS THEN THAT I GUESS MAYBE I KINDA REALIZED THAT KITTY MIGHT NOT BE HALF THE DWEEB I ALWAYS THOUGHT SHE WAS.
" 'COURSE, NO SELF-RESPECTING TEEN I KNOW WOULD CALL HERSELF 'KITTY'..."

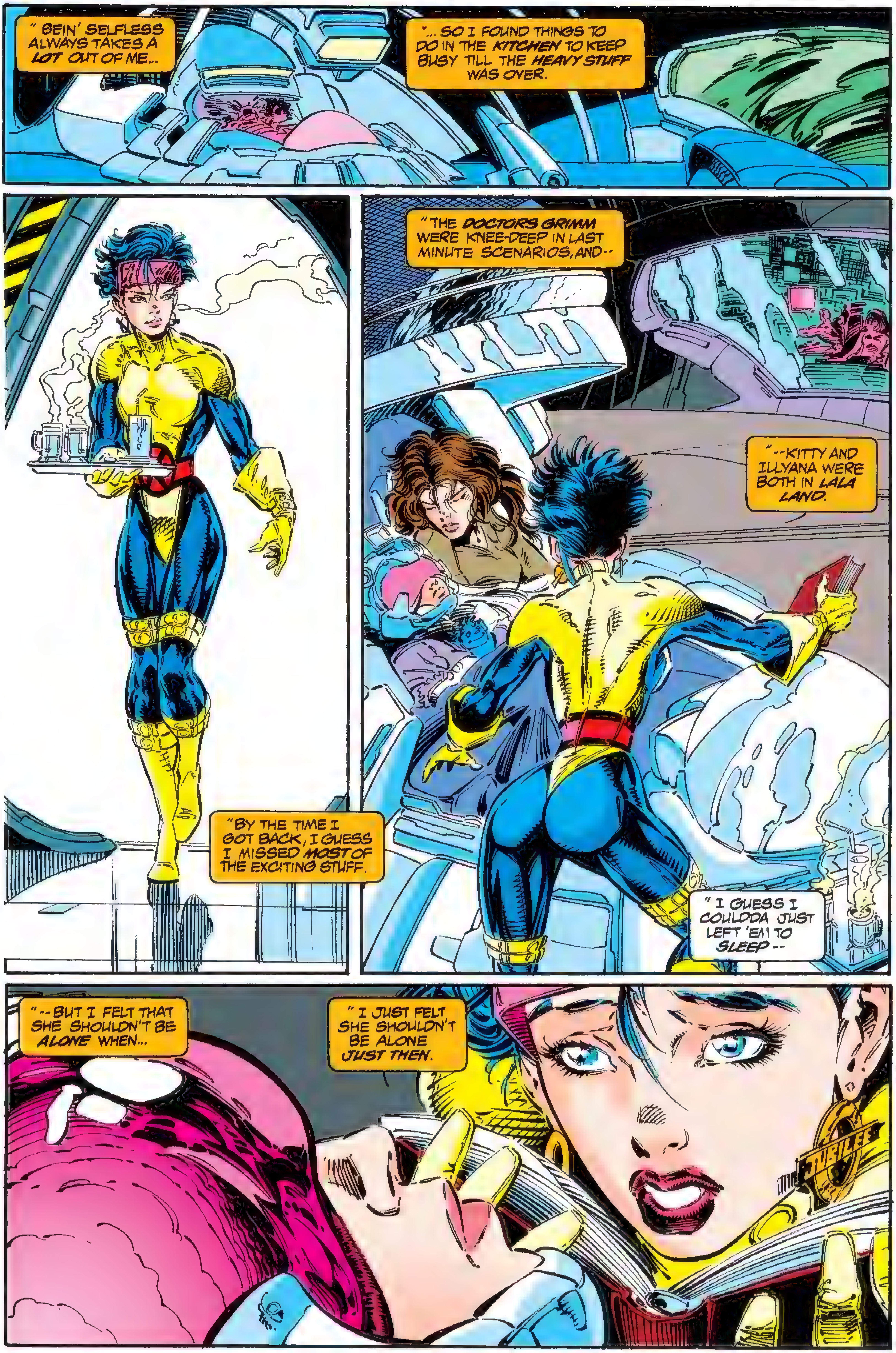

"-WHAT WAS IT-- AN HOUR... TWO?
"SITTIN' THERE ON THE BED, YAKKIN' AND WHISPERIN' AND--
"--DON'T EVER TELL ANYBODY THIS, 'CAUSE I'LL DENY IT--
"--AND GIGGLIN'...
"...GAWD, I CAN'T BELIEVE I ACTUALLY GIGGLED!
"EVERYTHING SEEMED, ALMOST FOR A HALF OF A FRACTION OF AN INSTANT, LIKE THAT EVERYTHING WAS 'NORMAL.'
"TRUTH? IT WAS PROBABLY THE FIRST TIME SINCE MY TWELFTH BIRTHDAY, THAT I FELT LESS LIKE A MUTANT...
"...AND MORE LIKE A GIRL.
"AGAIN.
"I KNEW IT COULDN'T LAST."
FITZROY'S INJURIES NECESSITATED HIS RELEASE TO FEDERAL AUTHORITIES, CHARLES.
AND FORGE'S STATUS WITH THE GOVERNMENT HAS DISSUADED THE AUTHORITIES FROM ARRESTING PETER FOR THE ASSAULT.*
*SEE LAST ISSUE.--B.H.
THEN I SHOULD EXPECT YOU HOME BY DAWN?
YES, IT IS TO BE HOPED OUR RETURN WILL CALM PETER...
...HE IS HIGHLY AGITATED...
...AND CONCERNED ABOUT HIS SISTER.
AS ARE WE ALL, ORORO.
KLK
AS ARE WE ALL.

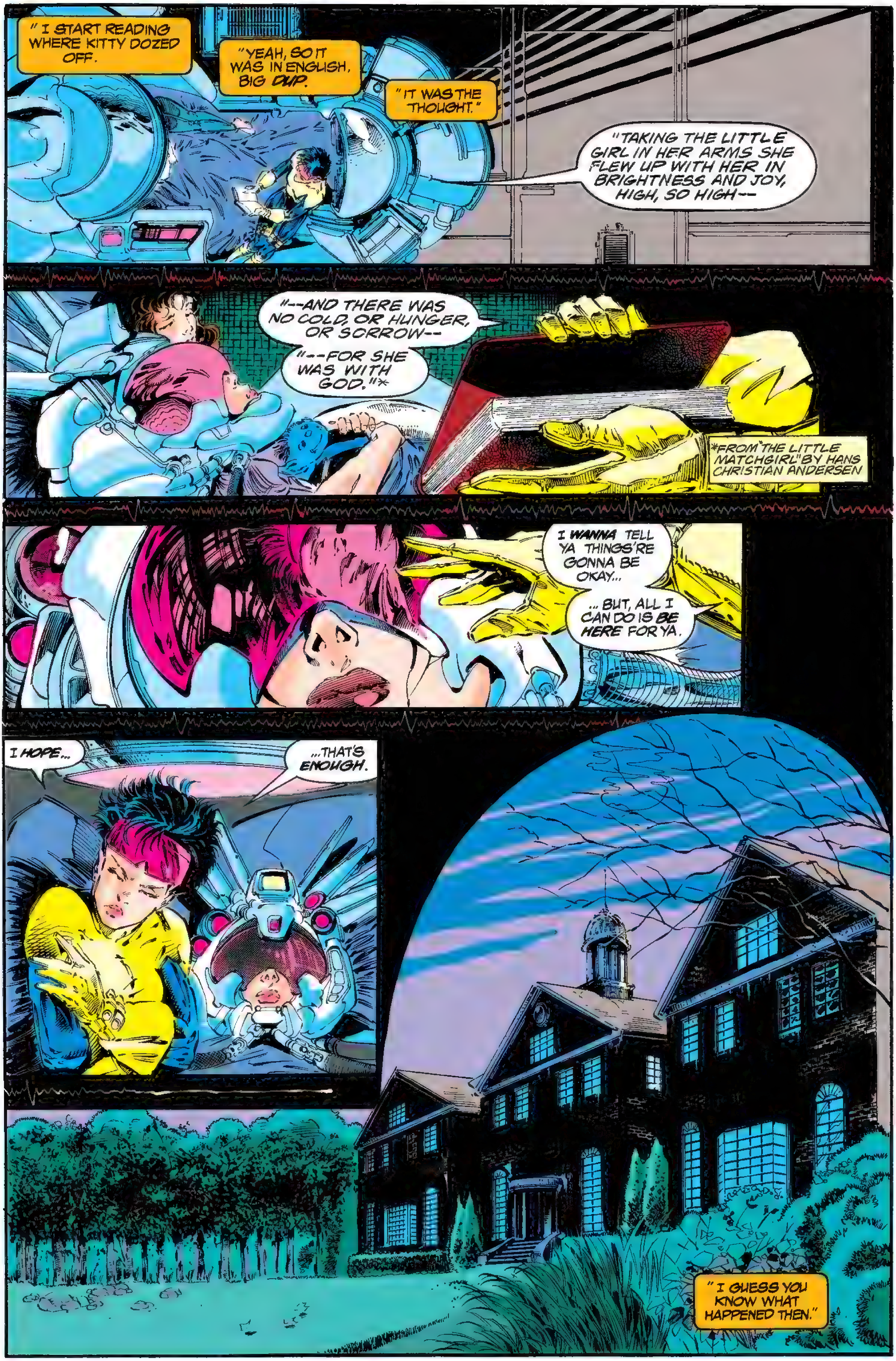

"BEFORE ANYBODY KNEW WHAT HAPPENED--
"--EVERYTHING JUST CURDLED."
UH, PROF-- WE COULD USE A HAND HERE.
WHECCH! CA CHHH FR BRU
GKKACCH!
SHE'S GONE INTO COMPLETE RESPIRATORY ARREST! HER LUNGS HAVE SHUT DOWN!
HURRY, MOIRA... SHE CAN'T BREATHE!
ONE CC OF NOREPENEPHRINE, MOIRA--IMMEDIATELY!
GIVE DR. MACTAGGERT ROOM TO WORK, KATHERINE!
PI--
COUH HOUKKT
PIOTR..?
‹HE'LL BE HERE SHORTLY, SNOWFLAKE.›
‹HOLD ON... PLEASE... JUST HOLD ON.›
I DON'T UNDERSTAND THIS! I THOUGHT THIS VIRUS ONLY AFFECTED HER MUTANT POWERS-- LATENT OR OTHERWISE.
SO DID WE, AT FIRST!
APPARENTLY IT WASN'T CONTENT WITH FEASTING ON HER MUTANT GENES.
THERE, CHILD--REST EASY.
TSSST

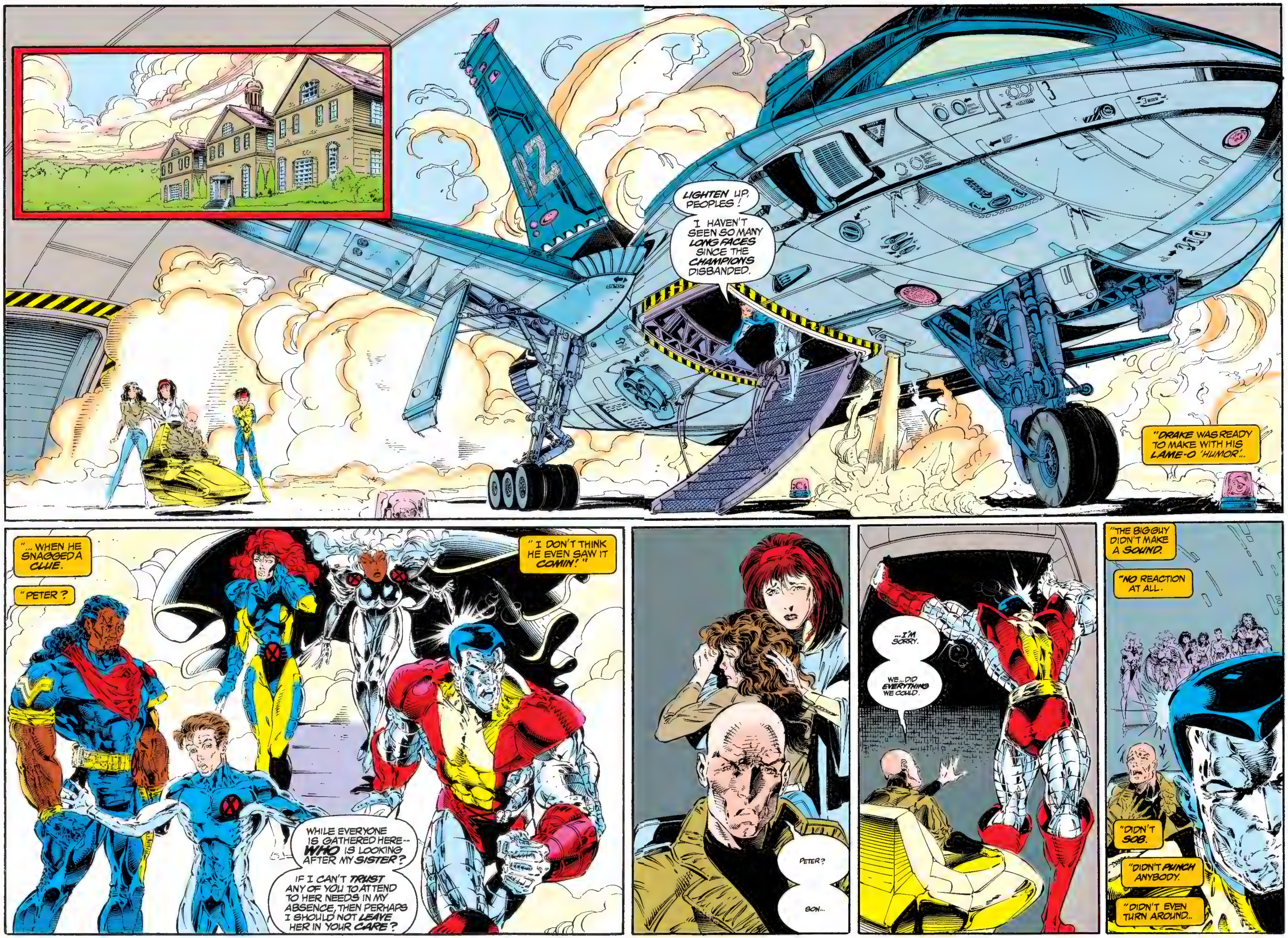

"LOOKIN' AT HER LIKE THAT --
"--CRYIN' OVER HER BESTEST FRIEND...
"... I GUESS I WAS EMBARRASSED FOR BEIN' JEALOUS IN THE FIRST PLACE.
"THAT LOOK IN HER EYES WAS LIKE SOMEBODY WATCHIN' THEMSELF DIE."
FORGIVE ME, ILLYANA.
FORGIVE ME FOR WHAT I'M ABOUT TO DO...
TH-THAT DEVICE, PROFESSOR... WHAT IS IT?!
IT IS OF SHI'AR ORIGIN... I CONFESS TO NOT FULLY UNDERSTANDING HOW IT WORKS.
SUFFICE IT TO SAY, IT MAY BE ILLYANA'S LAST HOPE.
THEN 'TIS NO HOPE AT ALL, CHARLES!
YE KNOW FULL WELL THIS MOLECULAR COHESION UNIT WILL DO NOTHING MORE THAN MAINTAIN HER GENETIC INTEGRITY AT ITS CURRENT STATE!
I REFUSE TO LET YE DOOM THIS CHILD TO A LIFE IN A COMA!
AND I, MOIRA--I REFUSE TO SIT BACK AND DO NOTHING!
INSTEAD...

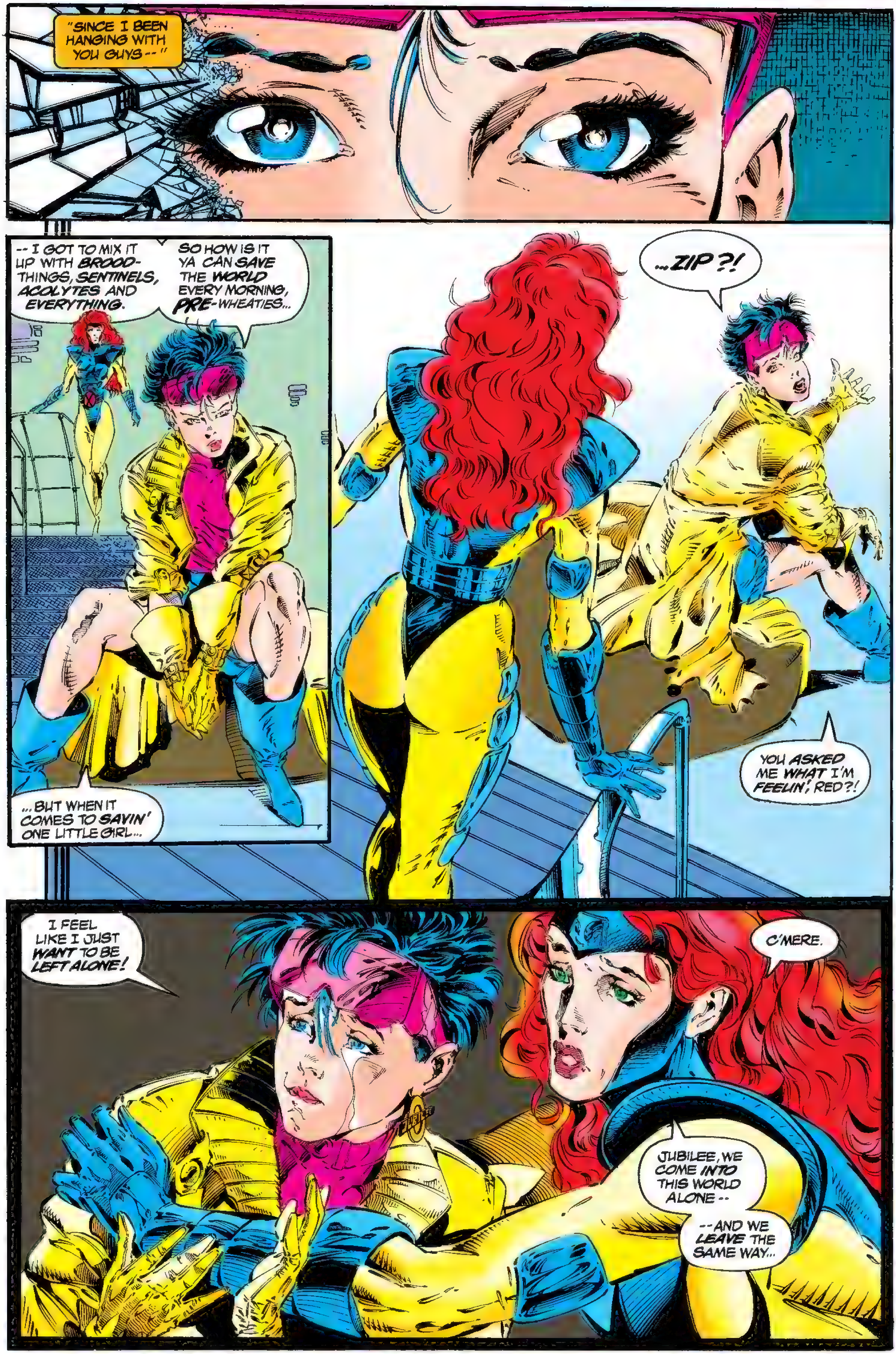

INSTEAD YOU'RE GOING TO SENTENCE HER TO--TO "THIS"?
TO LIVE A LIFE WITHOUT THE ABILITY TO THINK?
WITHOUT THE CAPABILITY TO SMILE...
... WITHOUT THE CAPACITY FOR LOVE?
SIR, ILLYANA WAS MY BEST FRIEND IN THE ENTIRE WORLD.
I... I'D DO ANYTHING FOR HER AND SHE--
--SHE'D DO THE SAME.
AND THAT "ANYTHING" INCLUDES KNOWING WHEN TO HOLD ON...
WHEN TO...
...LET GO.
"ABOUT THEN, I JUST KIND OF PHASED OUT.
"DEATH AND DYING WAS NEVER A BIG DINNER TOPIC IN SOUTHERN CAL.
"WHILE THE THREE OF THEM TALKED IT OUT AMONGST THEMSELVES, I...
"... I DID SOMETHING KIND OF...
"... I GUESS THE WORD IS, 'STRANGE'?"

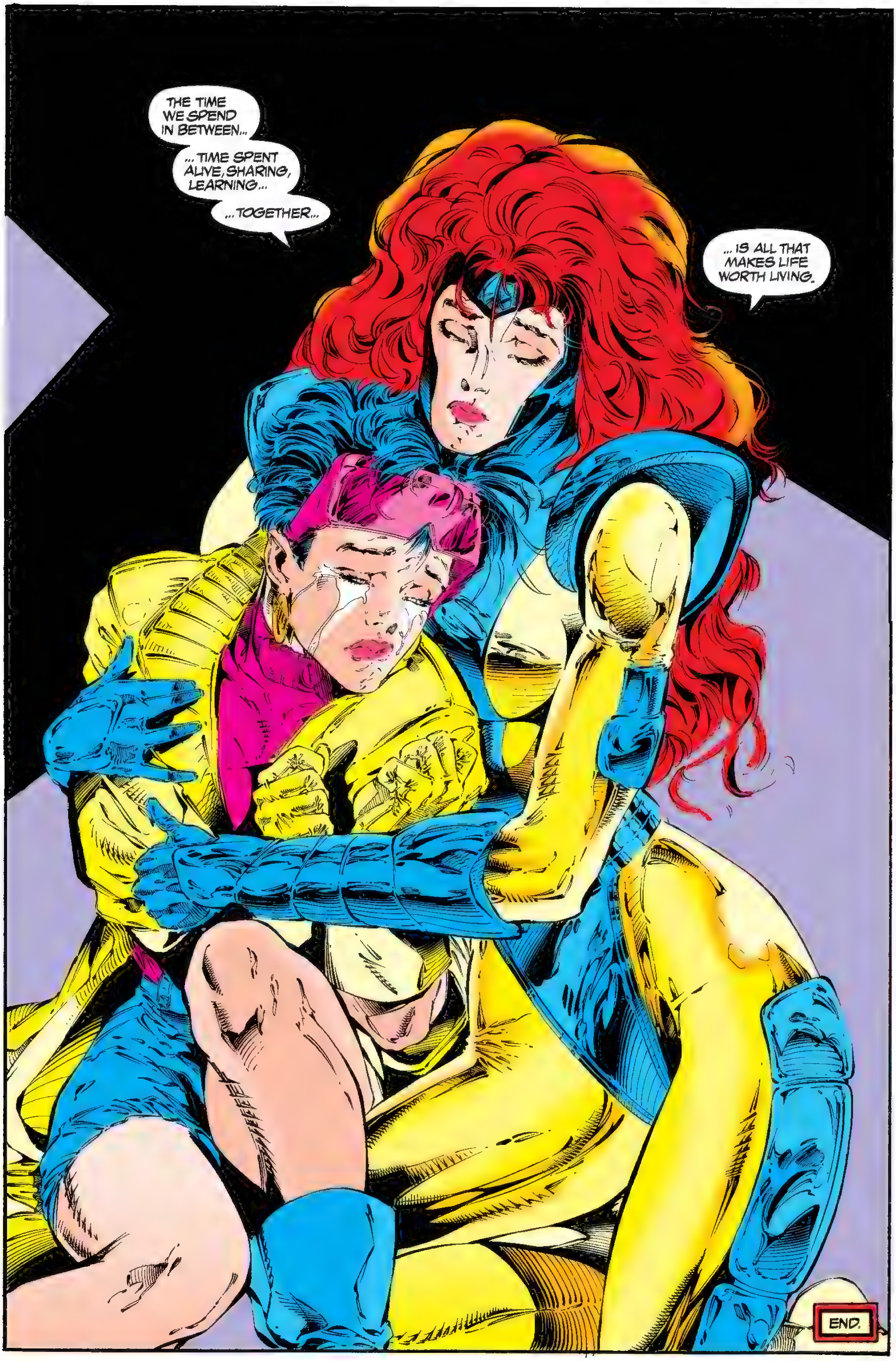

"HERE THEY ARE...
"... DEBATIN' OVER WHETHER THEY SHOULD HELP HER *LIVE* OR...
"... OR NOT...
"... AND THE ONLY THING I CAN *THINK* OF IS HELPIN' HER WITH HER *STUPID OLE' DOLL*.
"I MEAN, IF I COULDN'T DO ANYTHING TO MAKE HER *BETTER*...
"... I GUESS I WAS WILLIN' TO SETTLE FOR MAKIN' HER *HAPPY*.
"LIKE I SAID...
"... *STRANGE*.
"FOR ME.


"BEIN' SELFLESS ALWAYS TAKES A LOT OUT OF ME...
"...SO I FOUND THINGS TO DO IN THE KITCHEN TO KEEP BUSY TILL THE HEAVY STUFF WAS OVER.
"BY THE TIME I GOT BACK, I GUESS I MISSED MOST OF THE EXCITING STUFF.
"THE DOCTORS GRIMM WERE KNEE-DEEP IN LAST MINUTE SCENARIOS, AND--
"--KITTY AND ILLYANA WERE BOTH IN LALA LAND.
"I GUESS I COULDDA JUST LEFT 'EM TO SLEEP--
"--BUT I FELT THAT SHE SHOULDN'T BE ALONE WHEN...
"I JUST FELT SHE SHOULDN'T BE ALONE JUST THEN.
JUBILEE


"I START READING WHERE KITTY DOZED OFF.
"YEAH, SO IT WAS IN ENGLISH, BIG *DUP*.
"IT WAS THE THOUGHT."
"TAKING THE LITTLE GIRL IN HER ARMS SHE FLEW UP WITH HER IN BRIGHTNESS AND JOY, HIGH, SO HIGH--
"--AND THERE WAS NO COLD, OR HUNGER, OR SORROW--
"--FOR SHE WAS WITH GOD."*
*FROM "THE LITTLE MATCHGIRL" BY HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN
I *WANNA* TELL YA THINGS'RE GONNA BE OKAY...
...BUT, ALL I CAN DO IS *BE HERE* FOR YA.
I *HOPE*...
...THAT'S *ENOUGH*.
"I GUESS YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED THEN."


LIGHTEN UP, PEOPLES!
I HAVEN'T SEEN SO MANY LONG FACES SINCE THE CHAMPIONS DISBANDED.
"DRAKE WAS READY TO MAKE WITH HIS LAME-O 'HUMOR'...
"...WHEN HE SNAGGED A CLUE.
"PETER?
"I DON'T THINK HE EVEN SAW IT COMIN'!"
WHILE EVERYONE IS GATHERED HERE-- WHO IS LOOKING AFTER MY SISTER?
IF I CAN'T TRUST ANY OF YOU TO ATTEND TO HER NEEDS IN MY ABSENCE, THEN PERHAPS I SHOULD NOT LEAVE HER IN YOUR CARE?
PETER?
SON...
...I'M SORRY.
WE... DID EVERYTHING WE COULD.
"THE BIG GUY DIDN'T MAKE A SOUND.
"NO REACTION AT ALL.
"DIDN'T SOB.
"DIDN'T PUNCH ANYBODY.
"DIDN'T EVEN TURN AROUND...


"SINCE I BEEN HANGING WITH YOU GUYS--"
--I GOT TO MIX IT UP WITH BROOD-THINGS, SENTINELS, ACOLYTES AND EVERYTHING.
SO HOW IS IT YA CAN SAVE THE WORLD EVERY MORNING, PRE-WHEATIES...
...BUT WHEN IT COMES TO SAVIN' ONE LITTLE GIRL...
...ZIP?!
YOU ASKED ME WHAT I'M FEELIN', RED?!
I FEEL LIKE I JUST WANT TO BE LEFT ALONE!
C'MERE.
JUBILEE, WE COME INTO THIS WORLD ALONE--
--AND WE LEAVE THE SAME WAY...


THE TIME WE SPEND IN BETWEEN...
...TIME SPENT ALIVE, SHARING, LEARNING...
...TOGETHER...
...IS ALL THAT MAKES LIFE WORTH LIVING.
END.

MARVEL COMICS
X-MEN
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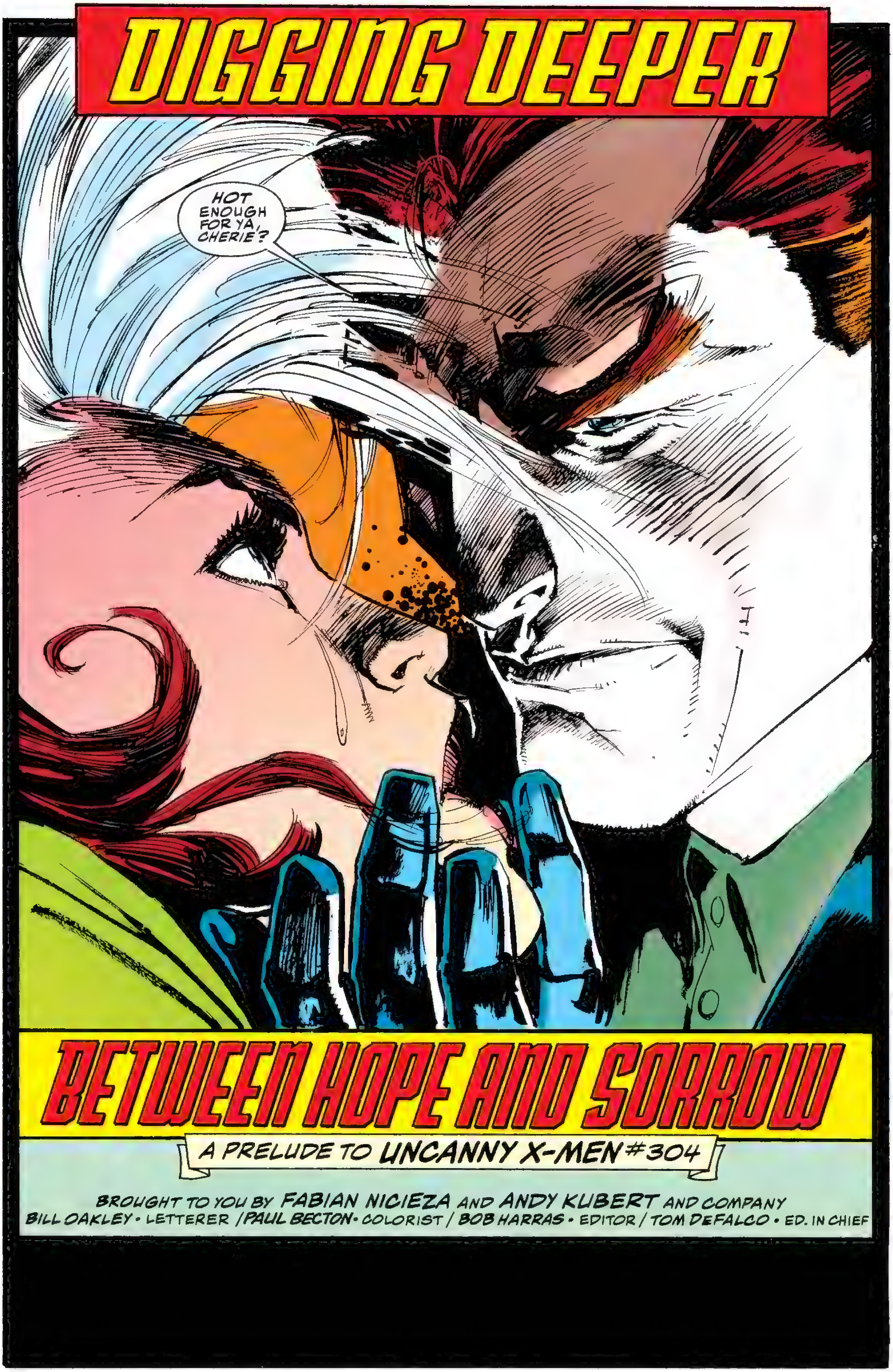
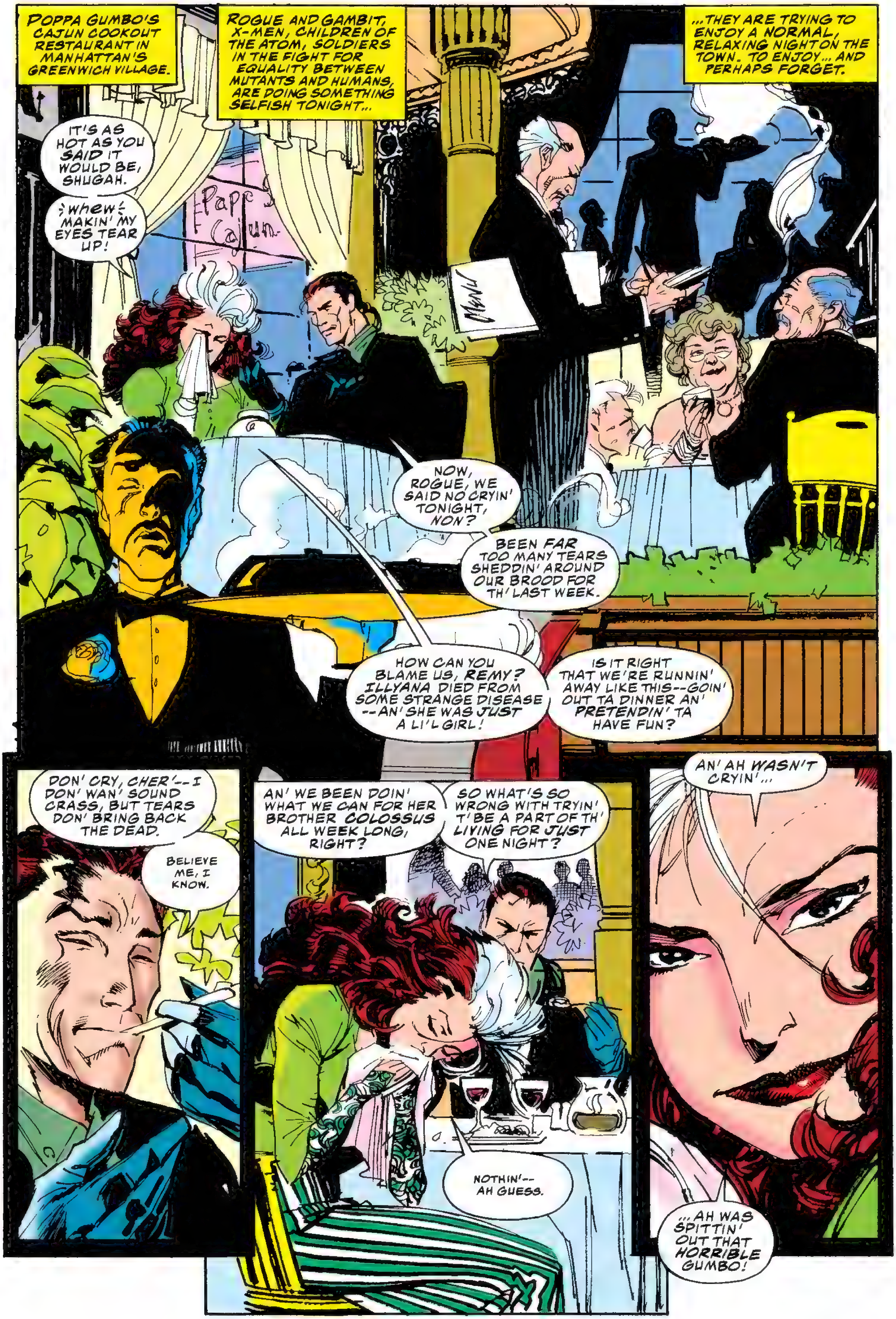
DIGGING DEEPER

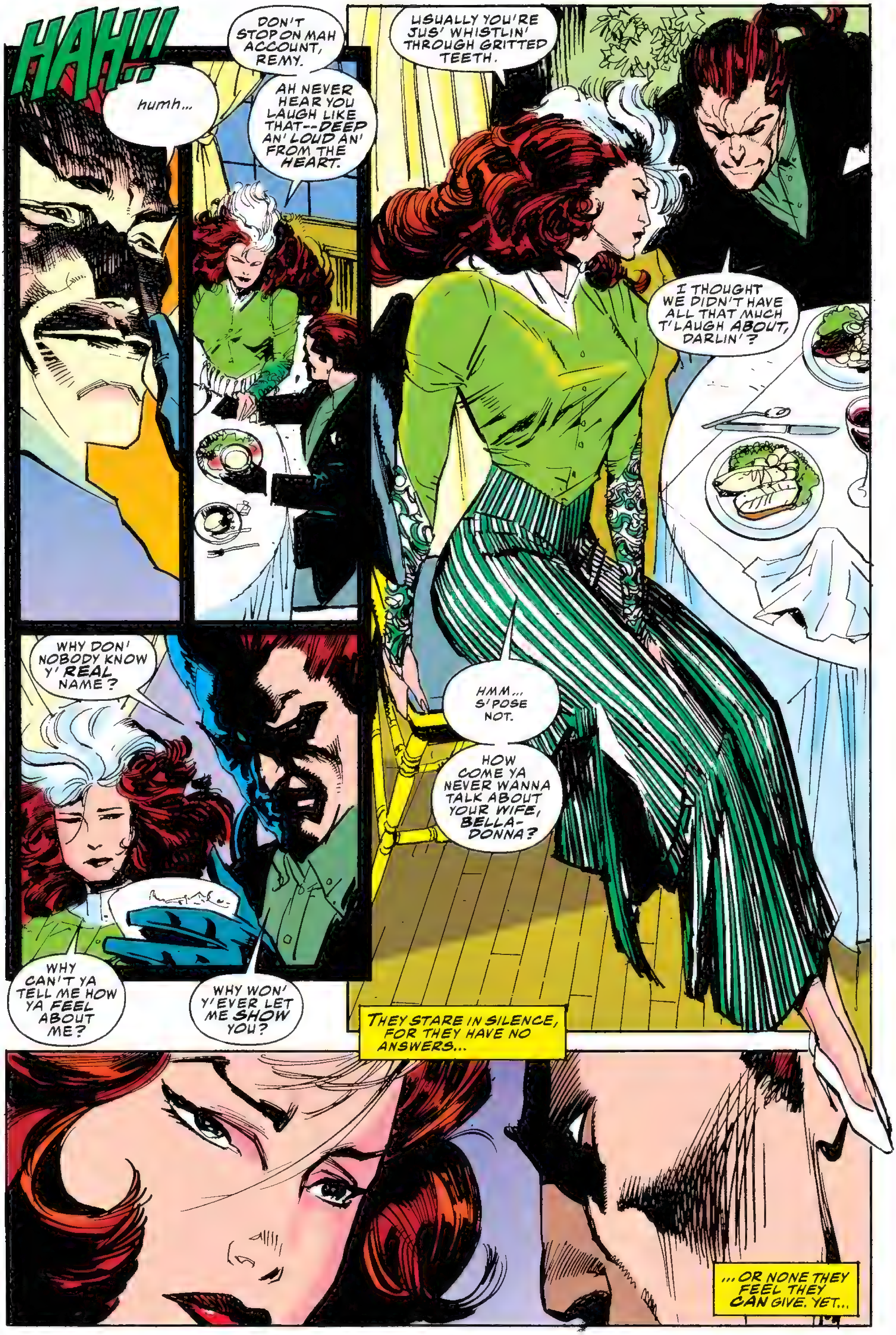

HOT ENOUGH FOR YA, CHERIE?

BETWEEN HOPE AND SORROW

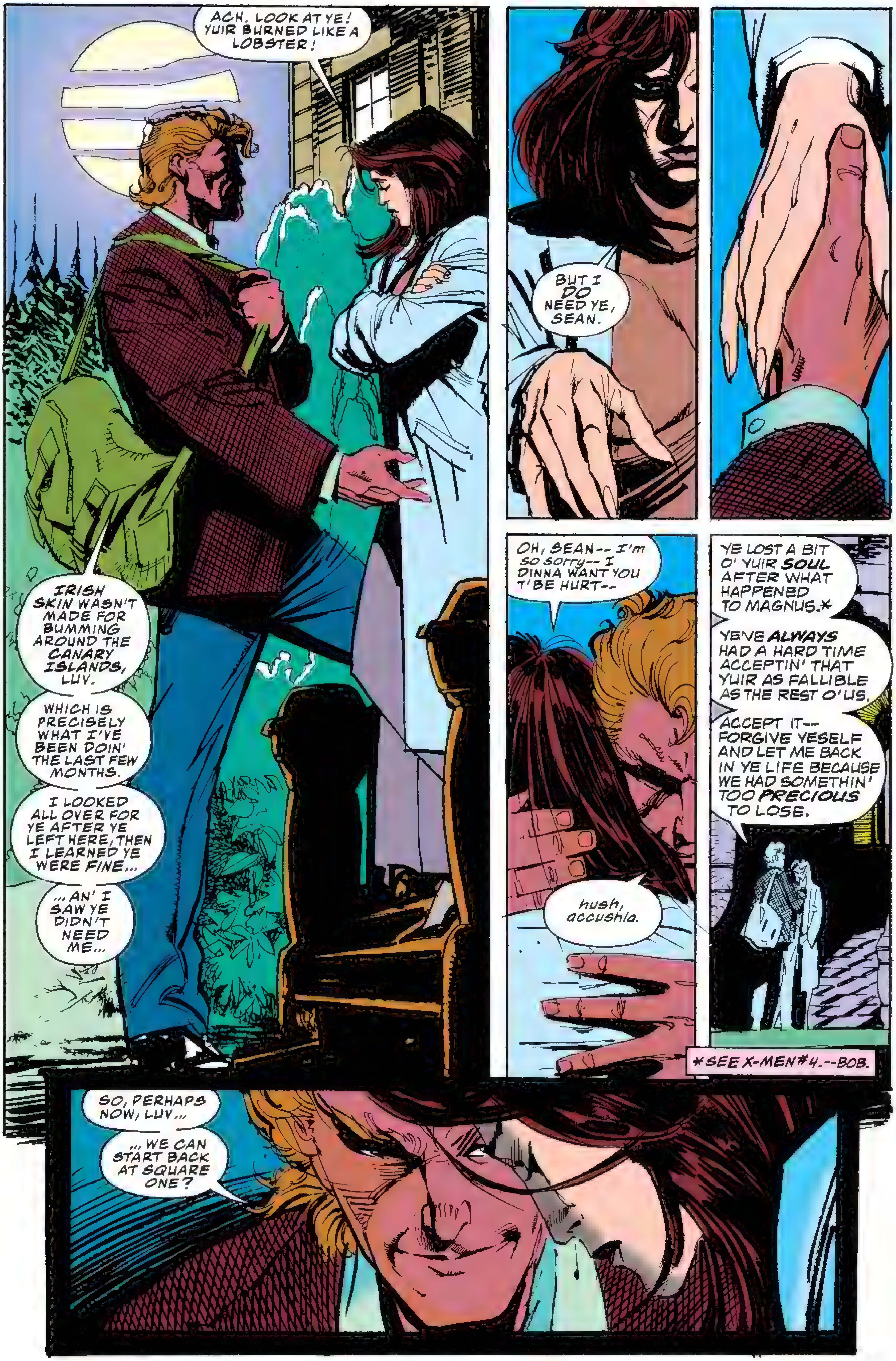
A PRELUDE TO UNCANNY X-MEN #304

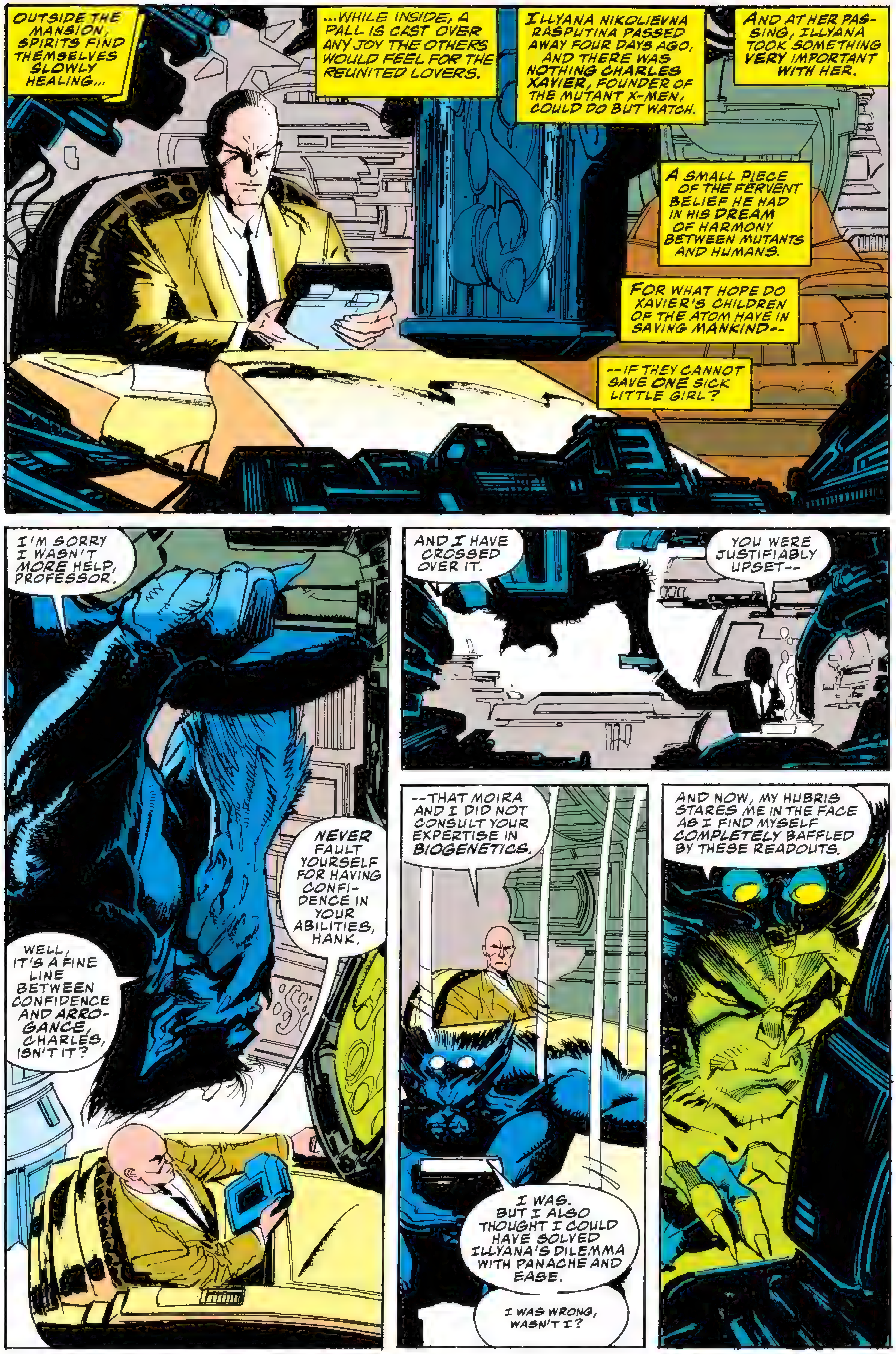
BROUGHT TO YOU BY FABIAN NICIEZA AND ANDY KUBERT AND COMPANY
BILL OAKLEY • LETTERER / PAUL BECTON • COLORIST / BOB HARRAS • EDITOR / TOM DEFALCO • ED. IN CHIEF

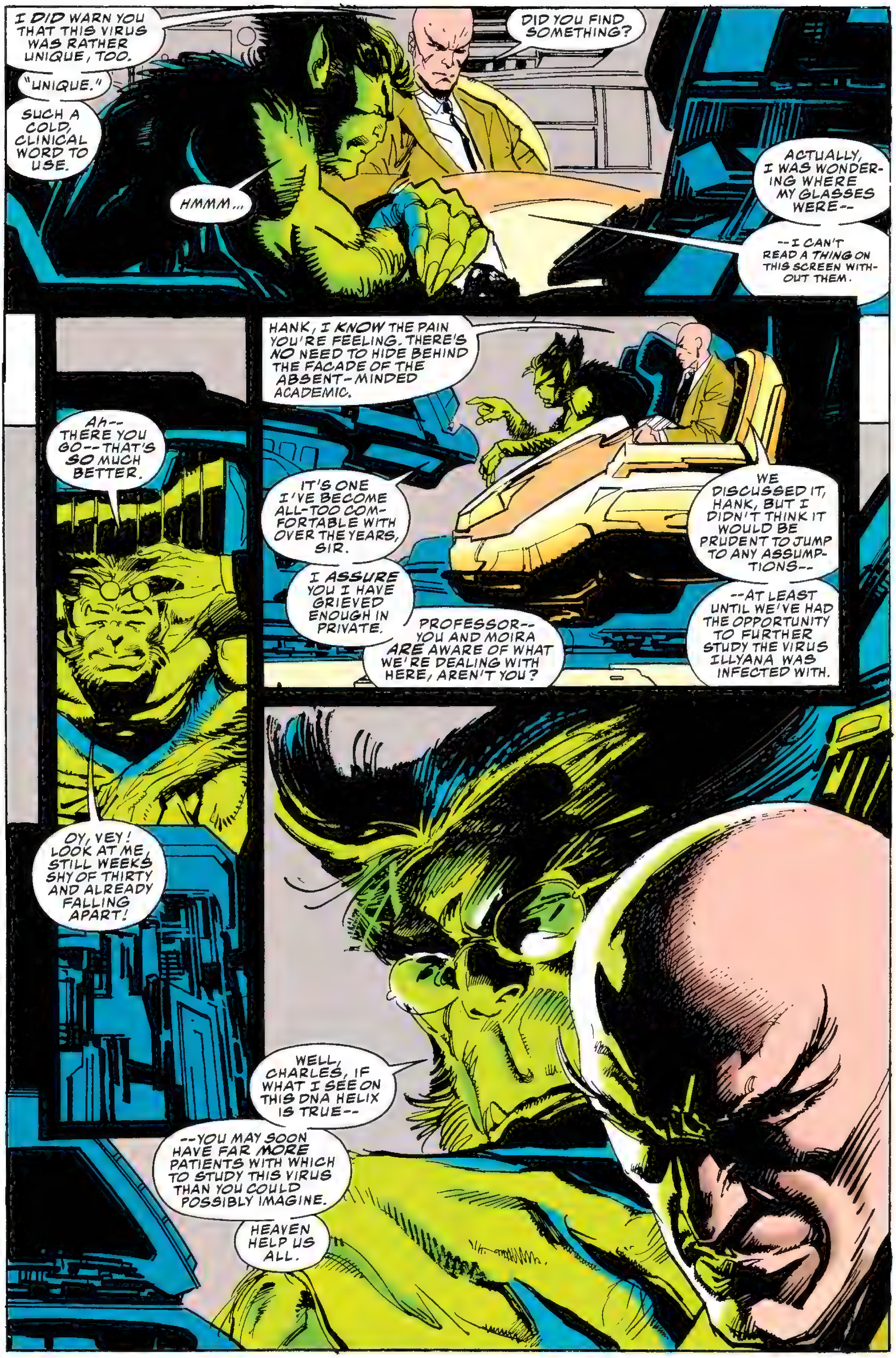

POPPA GUMBO'S CAJUN COOKOUT RESTAURANT IN MANHATTAN'S GREENWICH VILLAGE.
ROGUE AND GAMBIT, X-MEN, CHILDREN OF THE ATOM, SOLDIERS IN THE FIGHT FOR EQUALITY BETWEEN MUTANTS AND HUMANS, ARE DOING SOMETHING SELFISH TONIGHT...
...THEY ARE TRYING TO ENJOY A NORMAL, RELAXING NIGHT ON THE TOWN. TO ENJOY... AND PERHAPS FORGET.
IT'S AS HOT AS YOU SAID IT WOULD BE, SHUGAH.
whew! MAKIN' MY EYES TEAR UP!
Papp Cajun
Menu
NOW, ROGUE, WE SAID NO CRYIN' TONIGHT, NON?
BEEN FAR TOO MANY TEARS SHEDDIN' AROUND OUR BROOD FOR TH' LAST WEEK.
HOW CAN YOU BLAME US, REMY? ILLYANA DIED FROM SOME STRANGE DISEASE --AN' SHE WAS JUST A LI'L GIRL!
IS IT RIGHT THAT WE'RE RUNNIN' AWAY LIKE THIS--GOIN' OUT TA DINNER AN' PRETENDIN' TA HAVE FUN?
DON' CRY, CHER'--I DON' WAN' SOUND CRASS, BUT TEARS DON' BRING BACK THE DEAD.
BELIEVE ME, I KNOW.
AN' WE BEEN DOIN' WHAT WE CAN FOR HER BROTHER COLOSSUS ALL WEEK LONG, RIGHT?
SO WHAT'S SO WRONG WITH TRYIN' T' BE A PART OF TH' LIVING FOR JUST ONE NIGHT?
NOTHIN'-- AH GUESS.
AN' AH WASN'T CRYIN'...
...AH WAS SPITTIN' OUT THAT HORRIBLE GUMBO!

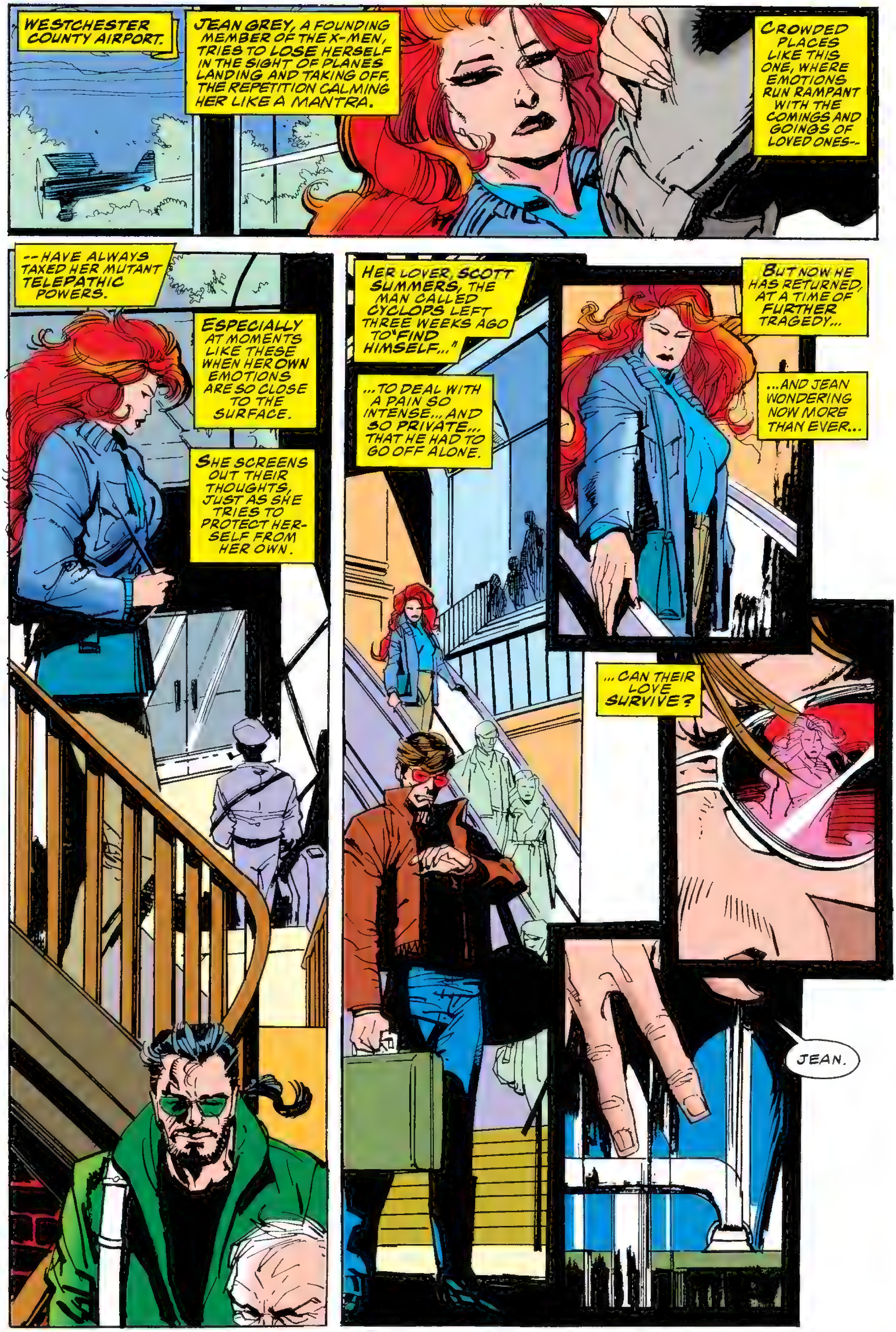

HAH!!
humh...
DON'T STOP ON MAH ACCOUNT, REMY.
AH NEVER HEAR YOU LAUGH LIKE THAT--DEEP AN' LOUD AN' FROM THE HEART.
USUALLY YOU'RE JUS' WHISTLIN' THROUGH GRITTED TEETH.
I THOUGHT WE DIDN'T HAVE ALL THAT MUCH T'LAUGH ABOUT, DARLIN'?
HMM... S'POSE NOT.
HOW COME YA NEVER WANNA TALK ABOUT YOUR WIFE, BELLA-DONNA?
WHY DON' NOBODY KNOW Y' REAL NAME?
WHY CAN'T YA TELL ME HOW YA FEEL ABOUT ME?
WHY WON' Y'EVER LET ME SHOW YOU?
THEY STARE IN SILENCE, FOR THEY HAVE NO ANSWERS...
...OR NONE THEY FEEL THEY CAN GIVE. YET...

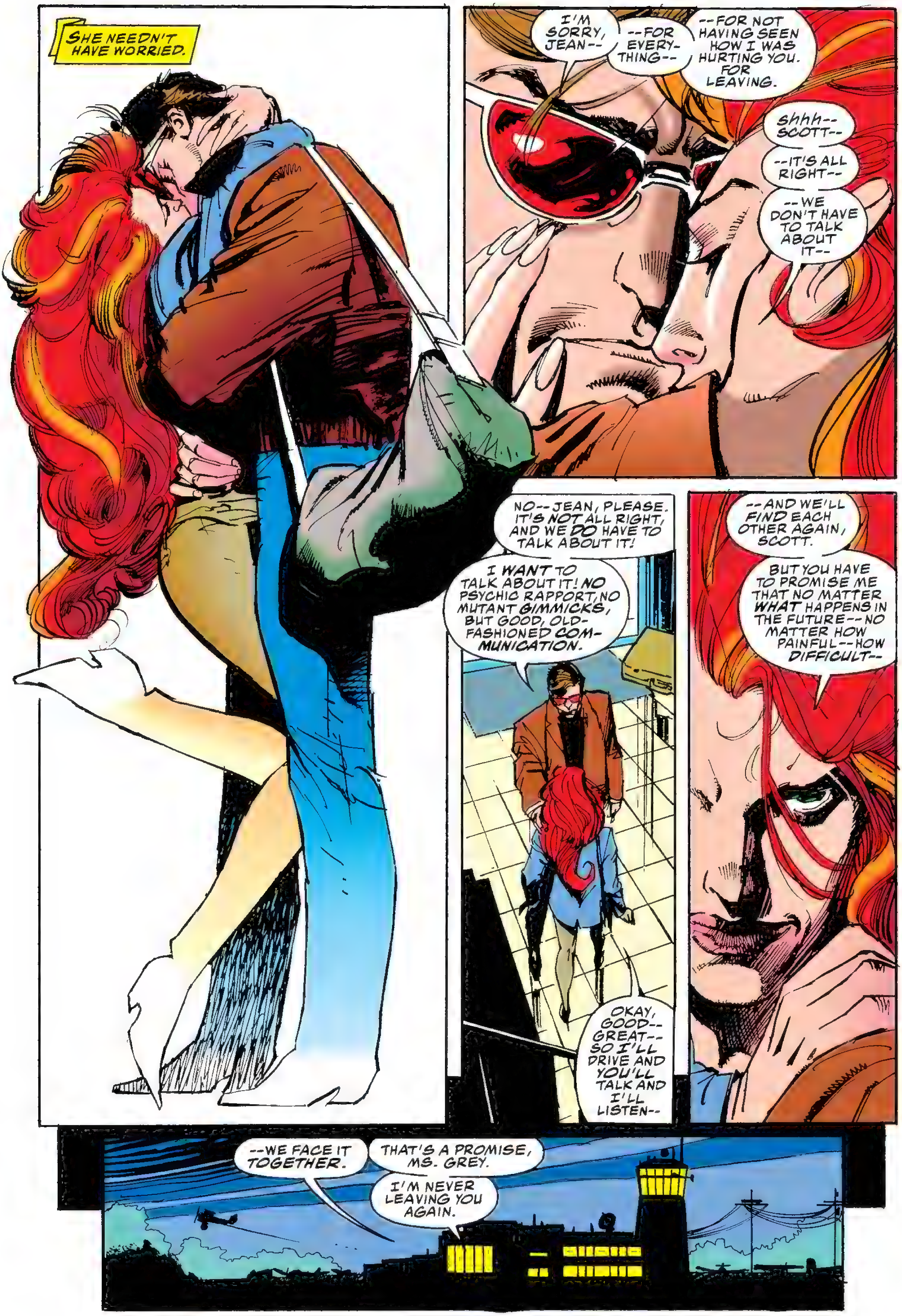
XAVIER'S MANSION, ONCE CONSIDERED A SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS, IN SALEMS CENTER, WESTCHESTER, NEW YORK.
SO MANY HAVE COME AND GONE, WALKING IN AND OUT OF THE LARGE, OAK FRONT DOORS.
RARELY HAVE THE PARTINGS BEEN PLEASANT...
...IT'S JUST THAT KIND OF PLACE...
...HARD TO LIVE HERE, HARDER TO LEAVE.
BUT MANY OF THOSE WHO DO WALK AWAY, EVENTUALLY, INEVITABLY--
--FIND THEIR WAY BACK...
YE DIDNAE HAVE TO USE A CAR SERVICE TO COME FROM THE AIRPORT.
I COULD'VE PICKED YE UP, Y'KNOW.
THAT I KNOW, MOIRA, DARLIN'.
JUST LIKE I KNOW--
--YE COULD JUST HAVE LIKELY DROPPED ME BACK DOWN AGAIN.
SEAN CASSIDY, ONCE KNOWN AS THE SONIC-SCREAMING MUTANT NAMED BANSHEE, IS TEASING THE WOMAN HE LOVES.
BUT THE EDGE-- THE HURT-- REMAINS OBVIOUS.
MOIRA MACTAGGERT, ONE OF THE WORLD'S FOREMOST GENETICISTS, KNOWS EVERYTHING THERE IS TO KNOW ON HOW A BODY AND MIND FUNCTION.
IT IS THE EMOTIONS WHICH SEEM HARDER FOR HER TO MASTER.


ACH. LOOK AT YE! YUIR BURNED LIKE A LOBSTER!
IRISH SKIN WASN'T MADE FOR BUMMING AROUND THE CANARY ISLANDS, LUV.
WHICH IS PRECISELY WHAT I'VE BEEN DOIN' THE LAST FEW MONTHS.
I LOOKED ALL OVER FOR YE AFTER YE LEFT HERE, THEN I LEARNED YE WERE FINE...
...AN' I SAW YE DIDN'T NEED ME...
BUT I DO NEED YE, SEAN.
OH, SEAN-- I'm so sorry-- I DINNA WANT YOU T'BE HURT--
hush, accushla.
YE LOST A BIT O' YUIR SOUL AFTER WHAT HAPPENED TO MAGNUS.*
YE'VE ALWAYS HAD A HARD TIME ACCEPTIN' THAT YUIR AS FALLIBLE AS THE REST O' US.
ACCEPT IT-- FORGIVE YESELF AND LET ME BACK IN YE LIFE BECAUSE WE HAD SOMETHIN' TOO PRECIOUS TO LOSE.
*SEE X-MEN #4.--BOB.
SO, PERHAPS NOW, LUV...
...WE CAN START BACK AT SQUARE ONE?

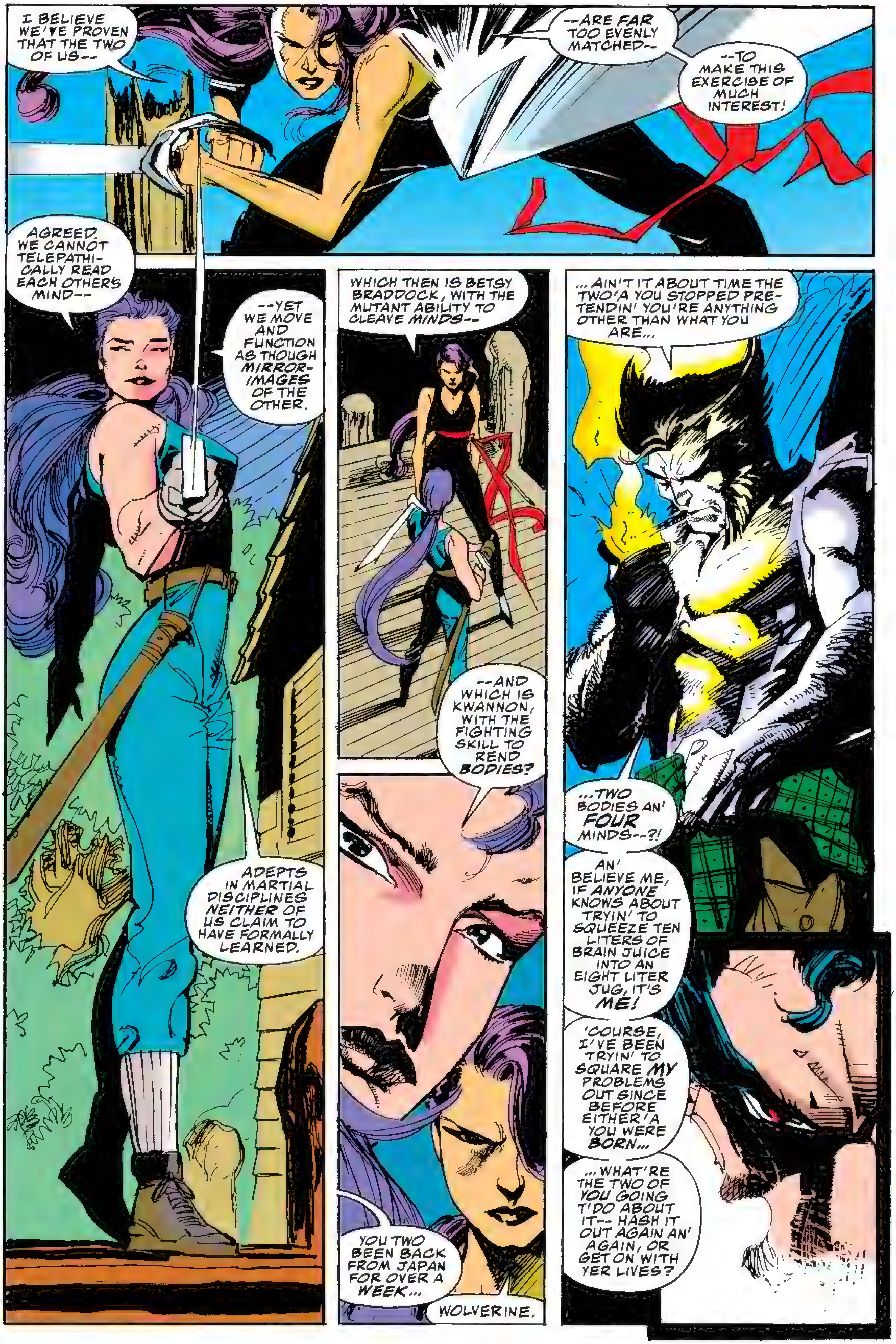

OUTSIDE THE MANSION, SPIRITS FIND THEMSELVES SLOWLY HEALING...
...WHILE INSIDE, A PALL IS CAST OVER ANY JOY THE OTHERS WOULD FEEL FOR THE REUNITED LOVERS.
ILLYANA NIKOLIEVNA RASPUTINA PASSED AWAY FOUR DAYS AGO, AND THERE WAS NOTHING CHARLES XAVIER, FOUNDER OF THE MUTANT X-MEN, COULD DO BUT WATCH.
AND AT HER PASSING, ILLYANA TOOK SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT WITH HER.
A SMALL PIECE OF THE FERVENT BELIEF HE HAD IN HIS DREAM OF HARMONY BETWEEN MUTANTS AND HUMANS.
FOR WHAT HOPE DO XAVIER'S CHILDREN OF THE ATOM HAVE IN SAVING MANKIND--
--IF THEY CANNOT SAVE ONE SICK LITTLE GIRL?
I'M SORRY I WASN'T MORE HELP, PROFESSOR.
NEVER FAULT YOURSELF FOR HAVING CONFIDENCE IN YOUR ABILITIES, HANK.
WELL, IT'S A FINE LINE BETWEEN CONFIDENCE AND ARROGANCE, CHARLES, ISN'T IT?
AND I HAVE CROSSED OVER IT.
YOU WERE JUSTIFIABLY UPSET--
--THAT MOIRA AND I DID NOT CONSULT YOUR EXPERTISE IN BIOGENETICS.
I WAS. BUT I ALSO THOUGHT I COULD HAVE SOLVED ILLYANA'S DILEMMA WITH PANACHE AND EASE.
I WAS WRONG, WASN'T I?
AND NOW, MY HUBRIS STARES ME IN THE FACE AS I FIND MYSELF COMPLETELY BAFFLED BY THESE READOUTS.

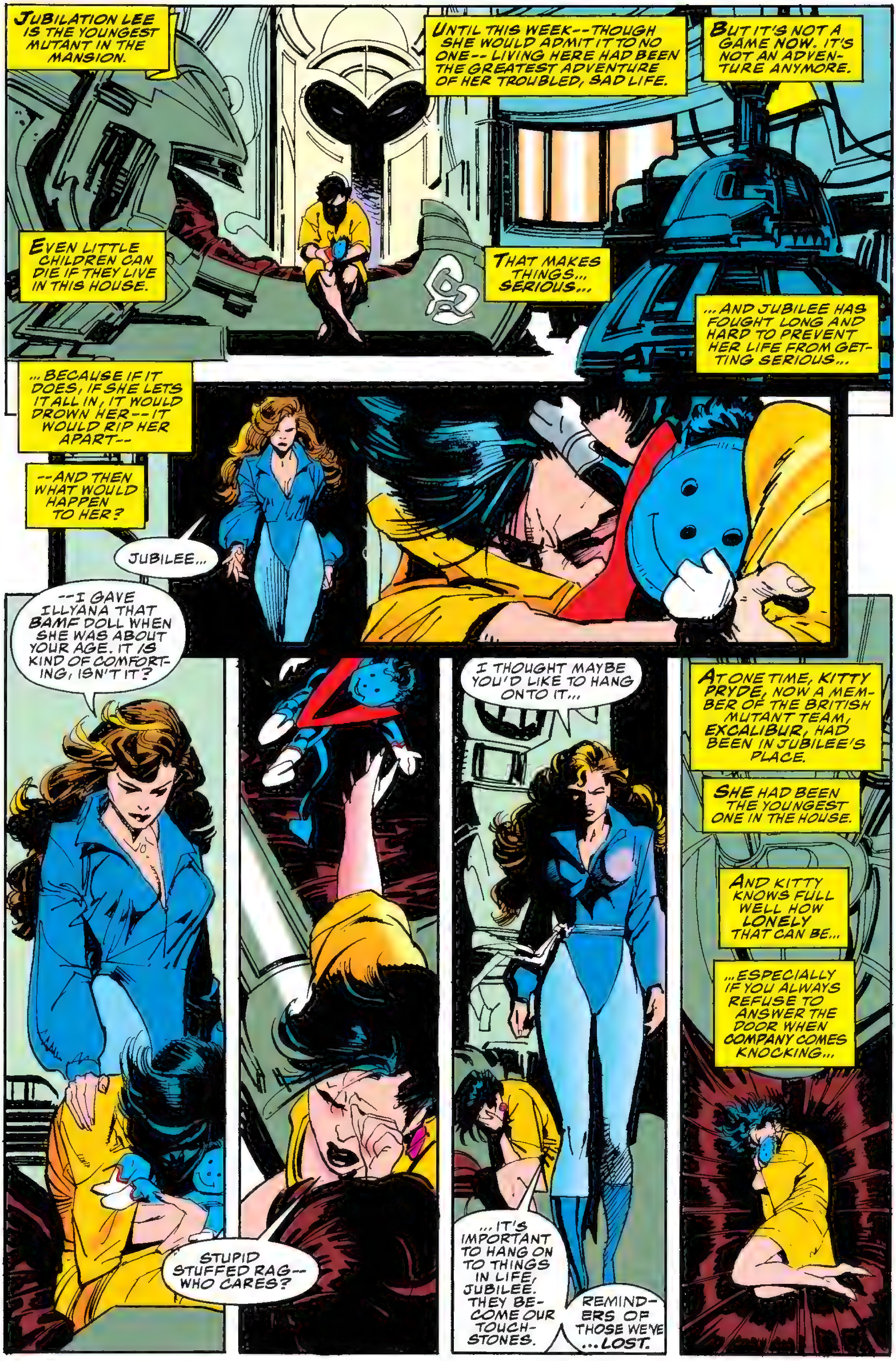

I DID WARN YOU THAT THIS VIRUS WAS RATHER UNIQUE, TOO.
"UNIQUE."
SUCH A COLD, CLINICAL WORD TO USE.
HMMM...
DID YOU FIND SOMETHING?
ACTUALLY, I WAS WONDERING WHERE MY GLASSES WERE--
--I CAN'T READ A THING ON THIS SCREEN WITHOUT THEM.
HANK, I KNOW THE PAIN YOU'RE FEELING. THERE'S NO NEED TO HIDE BEHIND THE FACADE OF THE ABSENT-MINDED ACADEMIC.
IT'S ONE I'VE BECOME ALL-TOO COMFORTABLE WITH OVER THE YEARS, SIR.
I ASSURE YOU I HAVE GRIEVED ENOUGH IN PRIVATE.
PROFESSOR-- YOU AND MOIRA ARE AWARE OF WHAT WE'RE DEALING WITH HERE, AREN'T YOU?
WE DISCUSSED IT, HANK, BUT I DIDN'T THINK IT WOULD BE PRUDENT TO JUMP TO ANY ASSUMPTIONS--
--AT LEAST UNTIL WE'VE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO FURTHER STUDY THE VIRUS ILLYANA WAS INFECTED WITH.
Ah-- THERE YOU GO--THAT'S SO MUCH BETTER.
OY, VEY! LOOK AT ME, STILL WEEKS SHY OF THIRTY AND ALREADY FALLING APART!
WELL, CHARLES, IF WHAT I SEE ON THIS DNA HELIX IS TRUE--
--YOU MAY SOON HAVE FAR MORE PATIENTS WITH WHICH TO STUDY THIS VIRUS THAN YOU COULD POSSIBLY IMAGINE.
HEAVEN HELP US ALL.

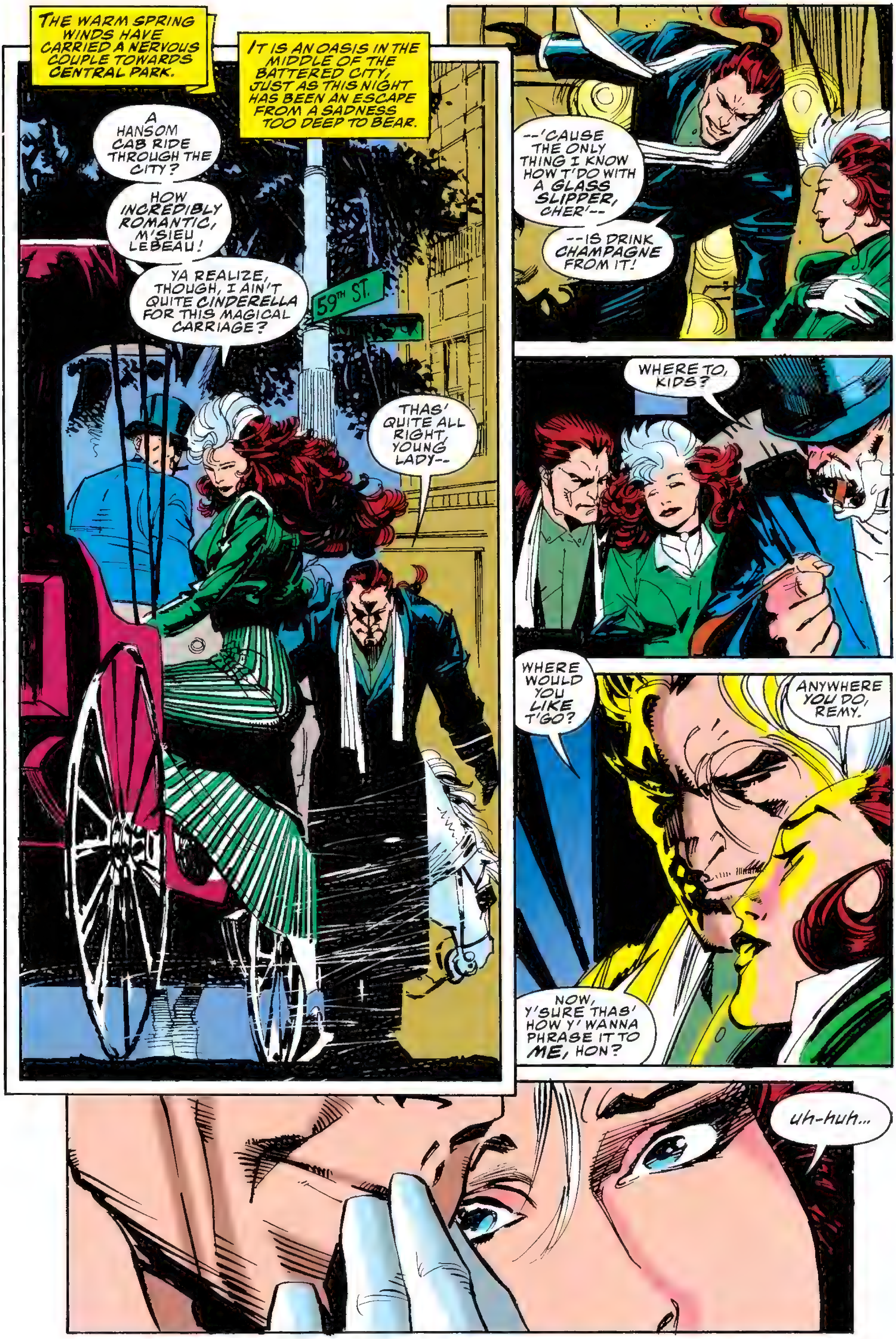

WESTCHESTER COUNTY AIRPORT.
JEAN GREY, A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE X-MEN, TRIES TO LOSE HERSELF IN THE SIGHT OF PLANES LANDING AND TAKING OFF. THE REPETITION CALMING HER LIKE A MANTRA.
CROWDED PLACES LIKE THIS ONE, WHERE EMOTIONS RUN RAMPANT WITH THE COMINGS AND GOINGS OF LOVED ONES--
--HAVE ALWAYS TAXED HER MUTANT TELEPATHIC POWERS.
ESPECIALLY AT MOMENTS LIKE THESE WHEN HER OWN EMOTIONS ARE SO CLOSE TO THE SURFACE.
SHE SCREENS OUT THEIR THOUGHTS, JUST AS SHE TRIES TO PROTECT HERSELF FROM HER OWN.
HER LOVER, SCOTT SUMMERS, THE MAN CALLED CYCLOPS LEFT THREE WEEKS AGO TO "FIND HIMSELF..."
...TO DEAL WITH A PAIN SO INTENSE... AND SO PRIVATE... THAT HE HAD TO GO OFF ALONE.
BUT NOW HE HAS RETURNED, AT A TIME OF FURTHER TRAGEDY...
...AND JEAN WONDERING NOW MORE THAN EVER...
...CAN THEIR LOVE SURVIVE?
JEAN.

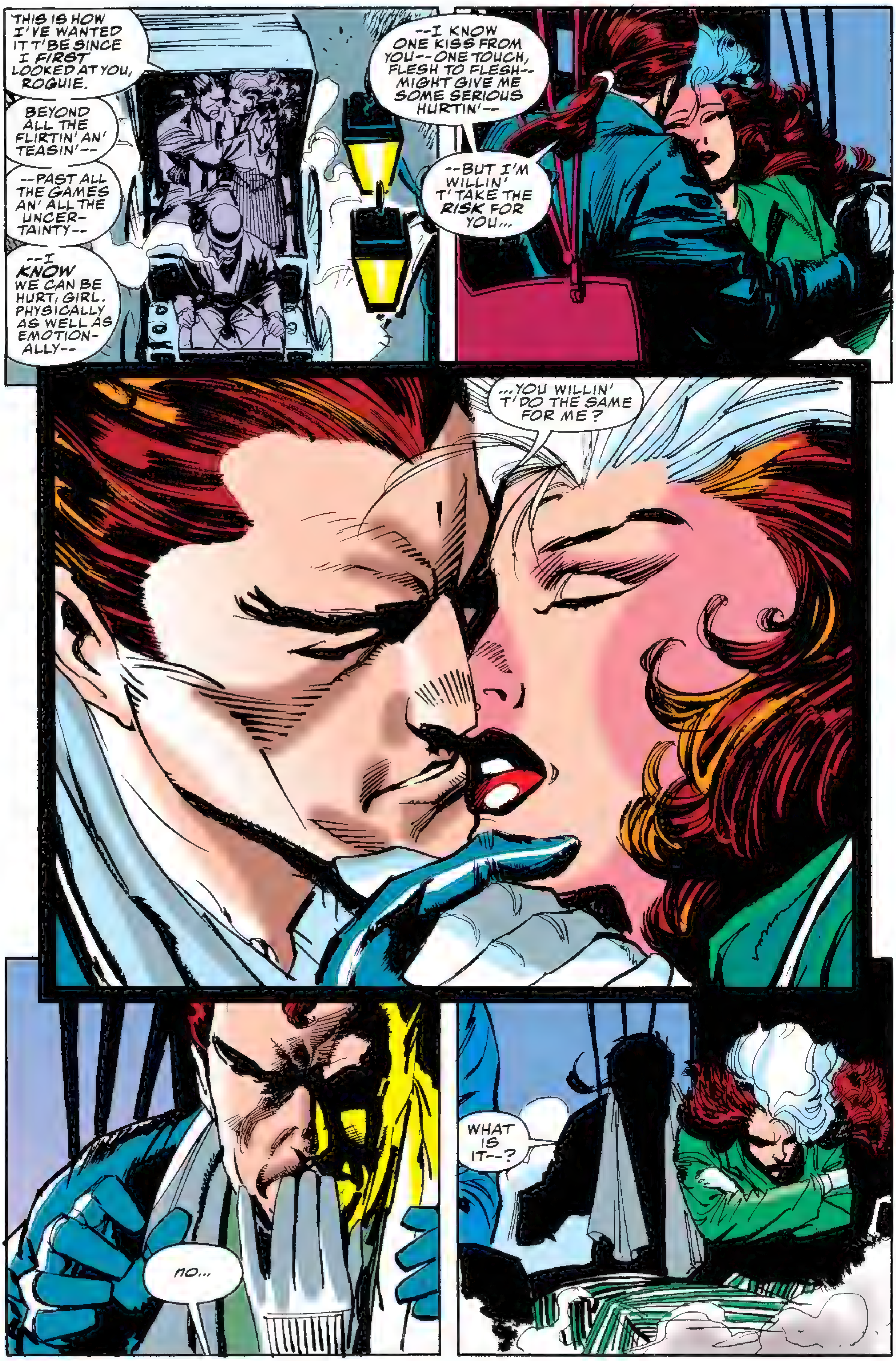

SHE NEEDN'T HAVE WORRIED.
I'M SORRY, JEAN--
--FOR EVERYTHING--
--FOR NOT HAVING SEEN HOW I WAS HURTING YOU. FOR LEAVING.
shhh-- SCOTT--
--IT'S ALL RIGHT--
--WE DON'T HAVE TO TALK ABOUT IT--
NO--JEAN, PLEASE. IT'S NOT ALL RIGHT, AND WE DO HAVE TO TALK ABOUT IT!
I WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT! NO PSYCHIC RAPPORT, NO MUTANT GIMMICKS, BUT GOOD, OLD-FASHIONED COMMUNICATION.
OKAY, GOOD-- GREAT-- SO I'LL DRIVE AND YOU'LL TALK AND I'LL LISTEN--
--AND WE'LL FIND EACH OTHER AGAIN, SCOTT.
BUT YOU HAVE TO PROMISE ME THAT NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS IN THE FUTURE--NO MATTER HOW PAINFUL--HOW DIFFICULT--
--WE FACE IT TOGETHER.
THAT'S A PROMISE, MS. GREY.
I'M NEVER LEAVING YOU AGAIN.

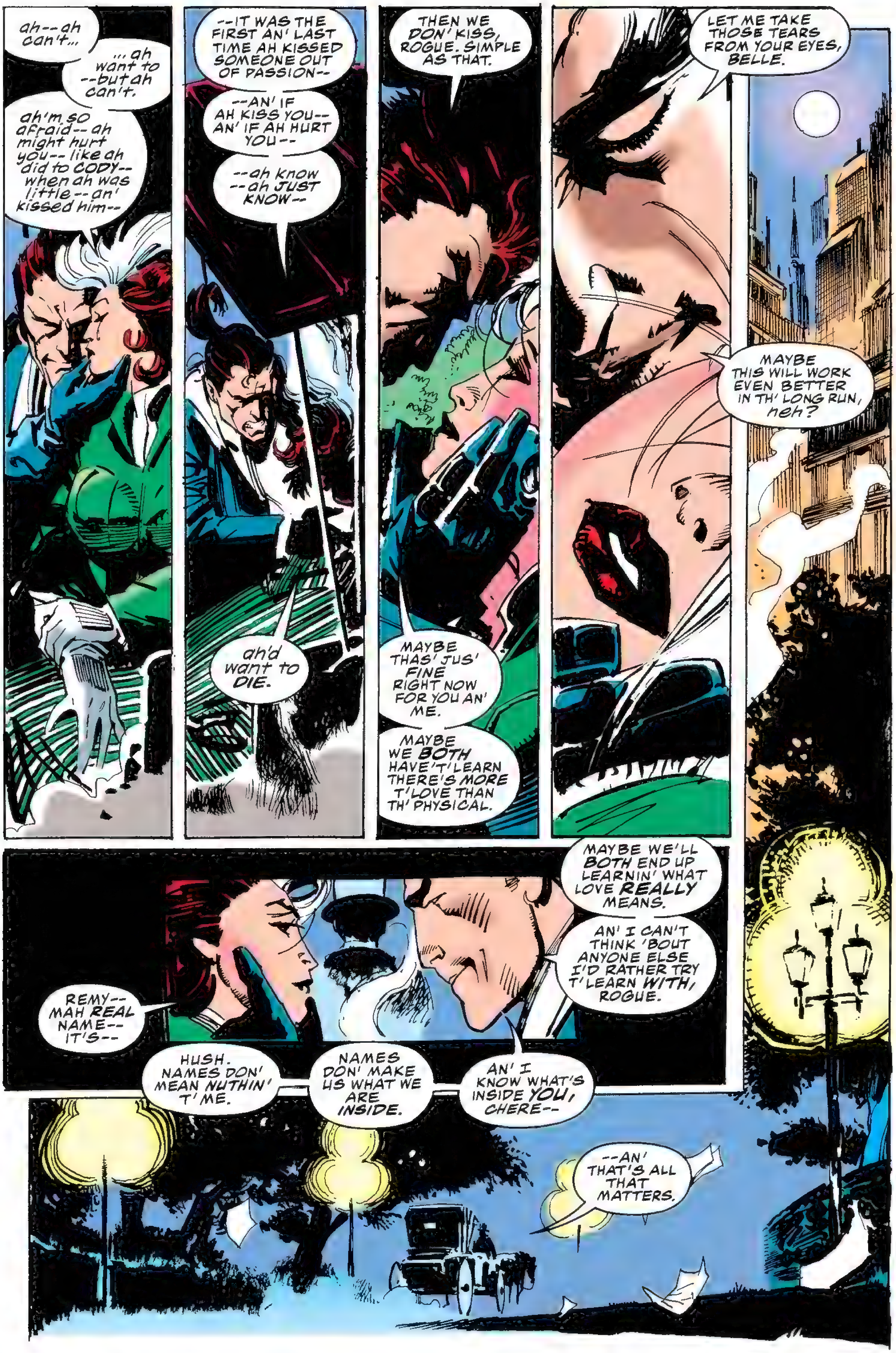
BEHIND XAVIER'S MANSION, ON THE BOATHOUSE OVERLOOKING THE SPUYTIN DYVIL COVE--
--A GAME OF CAT AND MOUSE IS PLAYED OUT--
--THOUGH NEITHER PARTY PARTICIPATING IN THE GAME--
--BETSY BRADDOCK AND KWANNON, KNOWN AS REVANCHE AND PSYLOCKE, TWO WOMEN SHARING EACH OTHER'S MIND AND BODY--
--HAVE STOPPED TO ASK THEMSELVES--
SHYEEK
--WHICH TWIN IS THE CAT, AND WHICH IS THE MOUSE?
SHAKKT
WELL-PLAYED...

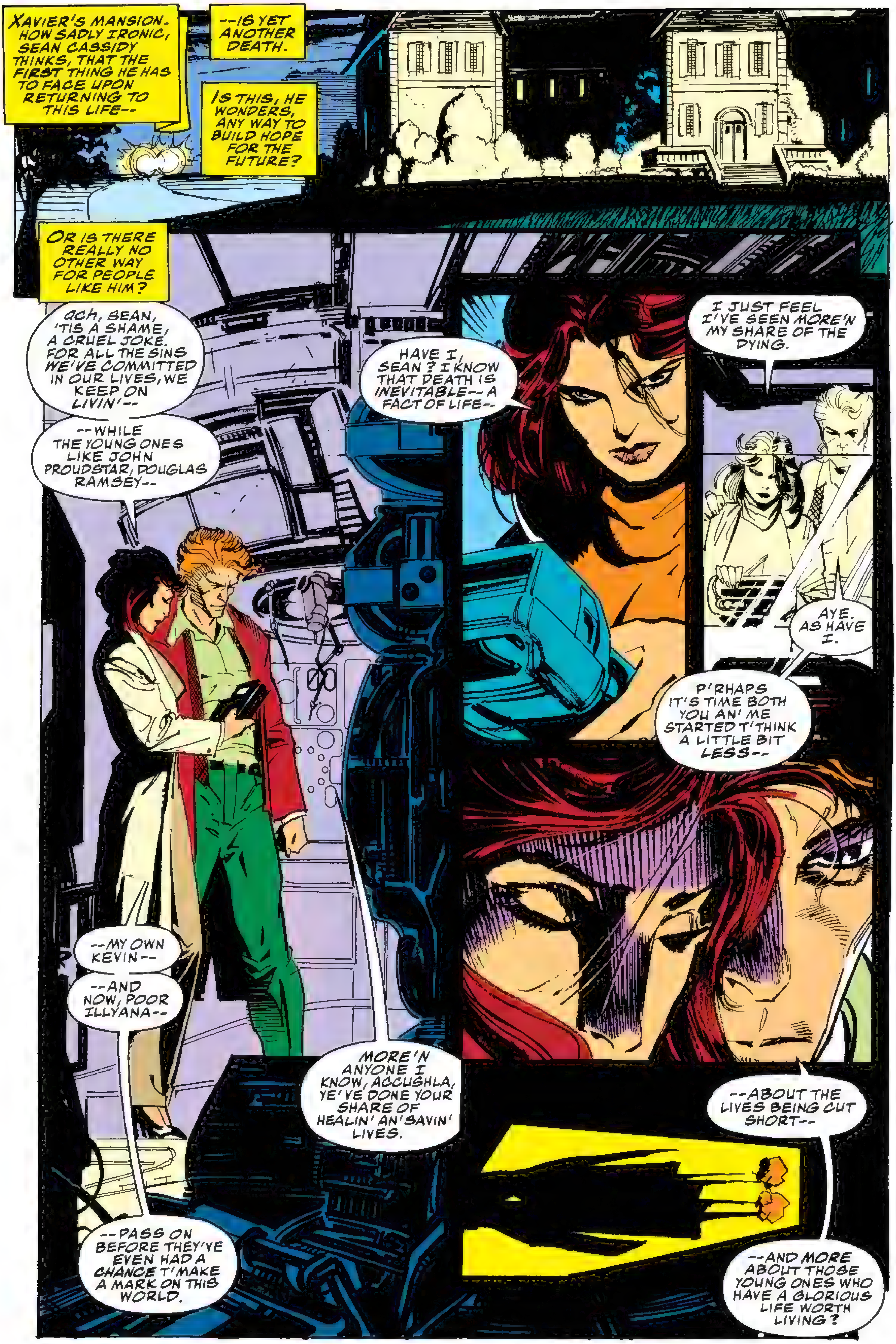

I BELIEVE WE'VE PROVEN THAT THE TWO OF US--
--ARE *FAR* TOO EVENLY MATCHED--
--TO MAKE THIS EXERCISE OF MUCH INTEREST!
AGREED. WE CANNOT TELEPATHICALLY READ EACH OTHER'S MIND--
--YET WE MOVE AND FUNCTION AS THOUGH *MIRROR-IMAGES* OF THE OTHER.
ADEPTS IN MARTIAL DISCIPLINES *NEITHER* OF US CLAIM TO HAVE FORMALLY LEARNED.
WHICH THEN IS BETSY BRADDOCK, WITH THE MUTANT ABILITY TO CLEAVE *MINDS*--
--AND WHICH IS KWANNON, WITH THE FIGHTING SKILL TO REND *BODIES?*
YOU TWO BEEN BACK FROM JAPAN FOR OVER A *WEEK*...
WOLVERINE.
...AIN'T IT ABOUT TIME THE TWO'A YOU STOPPED PRETENDIN' YOU'RE ANYTHING OTHER THAN WHAT YOU ARE...
...TWO BODIES AN' *FOUR* MINDS--?!
AN' BELIEVE ME, IF *ANYONE* KNOWS ABOUT TRYIN' TO SQUEEZE TEN LITERS OF BRAIN JUICE INTO AN EIGHT LITER JUG, IT'S *ME!*
'COURSE, I'VE BEEN TRYIN' TO SQUARE *MY* PROBLEMS OUT SINCE BEFORE EITHER'A YOU WERE *BORN*...
...WHAT'RE THE TWO OF YOU GOING T'DO ABOUT IT-- HASH IT OUT AGAIN AN' AGAIN, OR GET ON WITH YER LIVES?

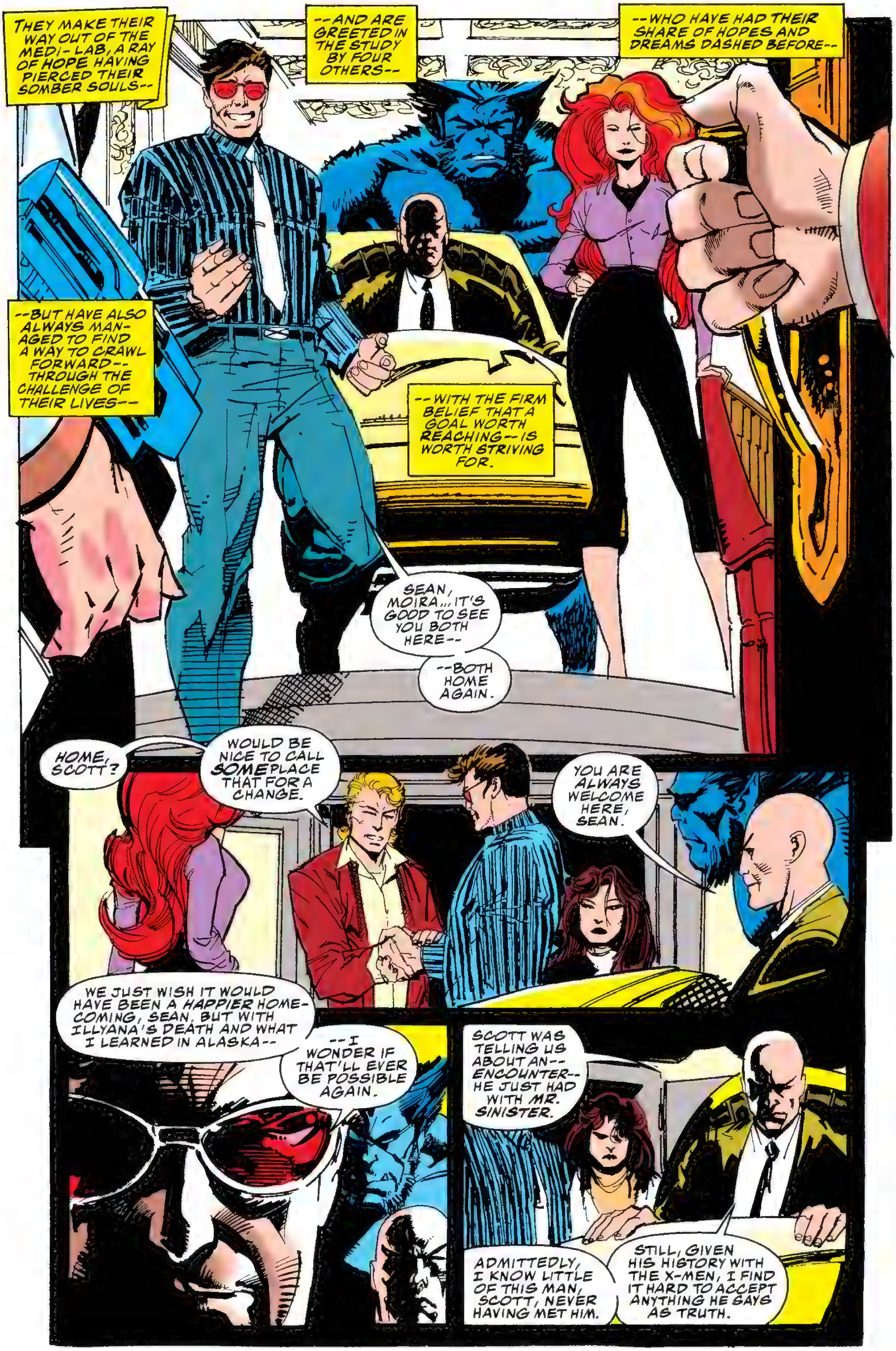

JUBILATION LEE IS THE YOUNGEST MUTANT IN THE MANSION.
UNTIL THIS WEEK--THOUGH SHE WOULD ADMIT IT TO NO ONE--LIVING HERE HAD BEEN THE GREATEST ADVENTURE OF HER TROUBLED, SAD LIFE.
BUT IT'S NOT A GAME NOW. IT'S NOT AN ADVENTURE ANYMORE.
EVEN LITTLE CHILDREN CAN DIE IF THEY LIVE IN THIS HOUSE.
THAT MAKES THINGS... SERIOUS...
...AND JUBILEE HAS FOUGHT LONG AND HARD TO PREVENT HER LIFE FROM GETTING SERIOUS...
...BECAUSE IF IT DOES, IF SHE LETS IT ALL IN, IT WOULD DROWN HER--IT WOULD RIP HER APART--
--AND THEN WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO HER?
JUBILEE...
--I GAVE ILLYANA THAT BAMF DOLL WHEN SHE WAS ABOUT YOUR AGE. IT IS KIND OF COMFORTING, ISN'T IT?
STUPID STUFFED RAG--WHO CARES?
I THOUGHT MAYBE YOU'D LIKE TO HANG ONTO IT...
...IT'S IMPORTANT TO HANG ON TO THINGS IN LIFE, JUBILEE. THEY BECOME OUR TOUCHSTONES.
REMINDERS OF THOSE WE'VE ...LOST.
AT ONE TIME, KITTY PRYDE, NOW A MEMBER OF THE BRITISH MUTANT TEAM, EXCALIBUR, HAD BEEN IN JUBILEE'S PLACE.
SHE HAD BEEN THE YOUNGEST ONE IN THE HOUSE.
AND KITTY KNOWS FULL WELL HOW LONELY THAT CAN BE...
...ESPECIALLY IF YOU ALWAYS REFUSE TO ANSWER THE DOOR WHEN COMPANY COMES KNOCKING...


THE WARM SPRING WINDS HAVE CARRIED A NERVOUS COUPLE TOWARDS CENTRAL PARK.
IT IS AN OASIS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE BATTERED CITY, JUST AS THIS NIGHT HAS BEEN AN ESCAPE FROM A SADNESS TOO DEEP TO BEAR.
A HANSOM CAB RIDE THROUGH THE CITY?
HOW INCREDIBLY ROMANTIC, M'SIEU LEBEAU!
YA REALIZE, THOUGH, I AIN'T QUITE CINDERELLA FOR THIS MAGICAL CARRIAGE?
59TH ST.
THAS' QUITE ALL RIGHT, YOUNG LADY--
--'CAUSE THE ONLY THING I KNOW HOW T'DO WITH A GLASS SLIPPER, CHER'--
--IS DRINK CHAMPAGNE FROM IT!
WHERE TO, KIDS?
WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE T'GO?
ANYWHERE YOU DO, REMY.
NOW, Y'SURE THAS' HOW Y' WANNA PHRASE IT TO ME, HON?
uh-huh...

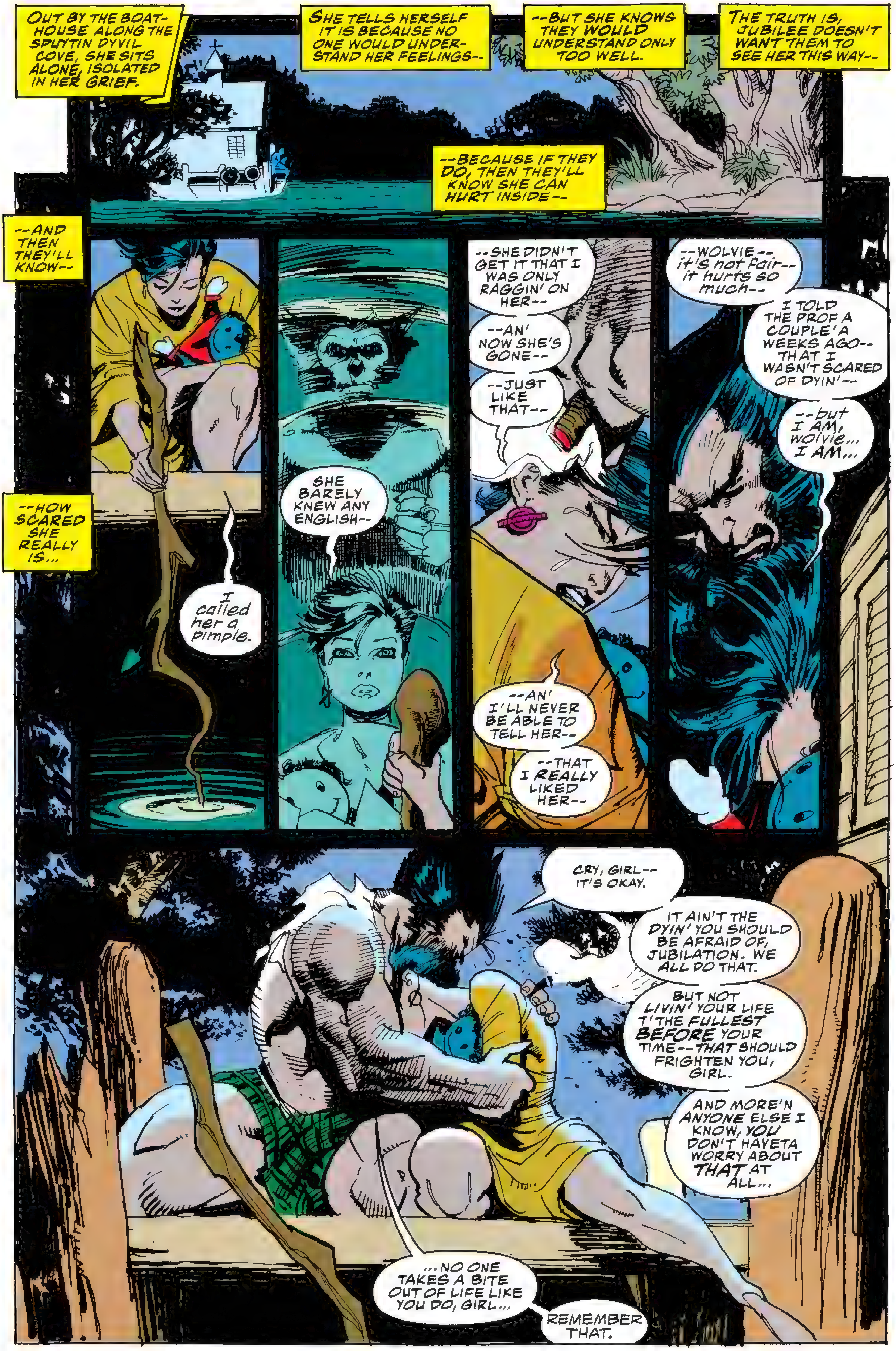

THIS IS HOW I'VE WANTED IT T'BE SINCE I *FIRST* LOOKED AT YOU, ROGUIE.
BEYOND ALL THE FLIRTIN' AN' TEASIN'--
--PAST ALL THE GAMES AN' ALL THE UNCERTAINTY--
--I *KNOW* WE CAN BE HURT, GIRL. PHYSICALLY AS WELL AS EMOTIONALLY--
--I KNOW ONE KISS FROM YOU--ONE TOUCH, FLESH TO FLESH--MIGHT GIVE ME SOME SERIOUS HURTIN'--
--BUT I'M WILLIN' T' TAKE THE *RISK* FOR YOU...
...YOU WILLIN' T'DO THE SAME FOR ME?
NO...
WHAT IS IT--?

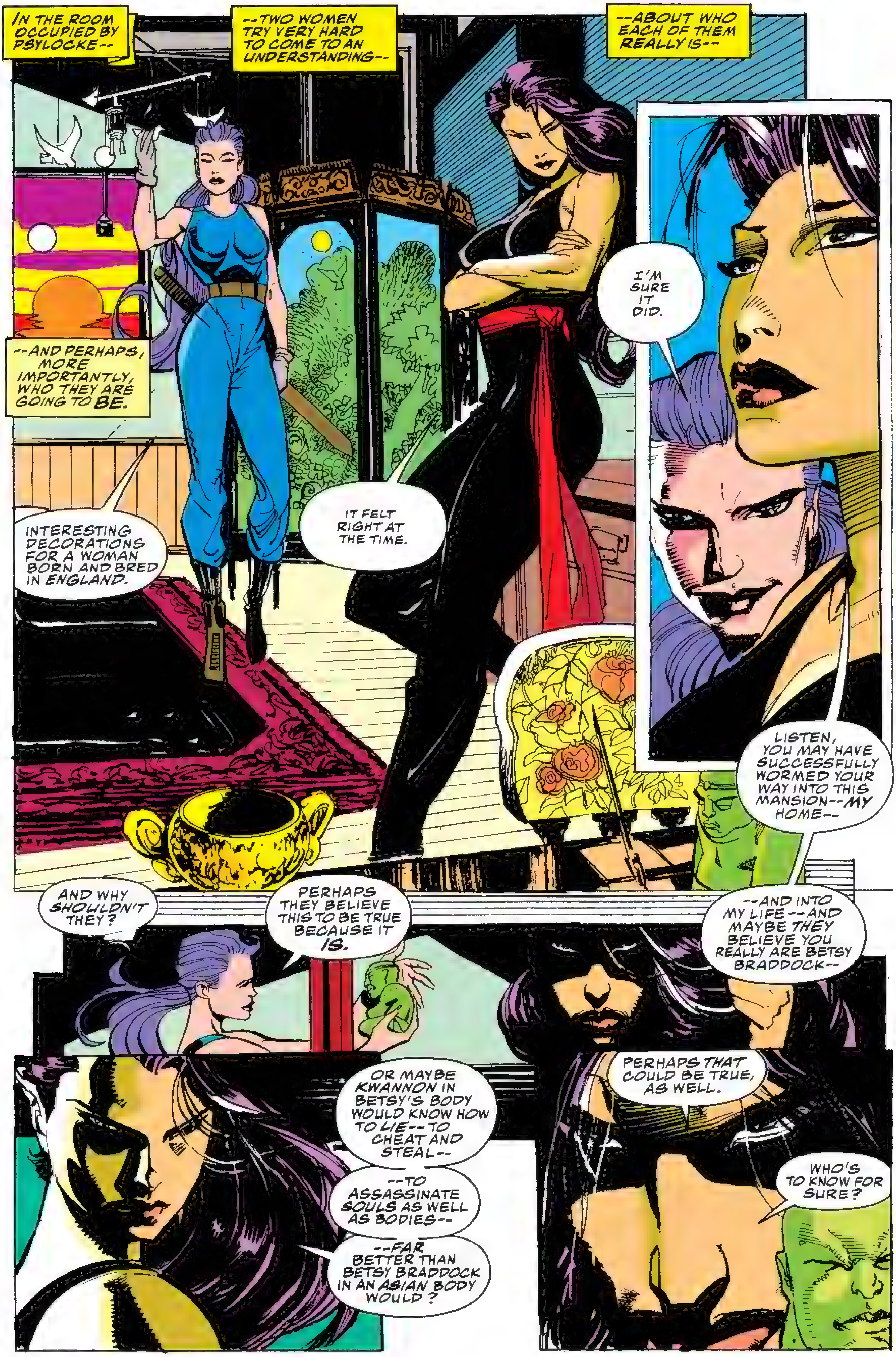

ah--ah can't...
...ah want to --but ah can't.
ah'm so afraid--ah might hurt you--like ah did to CODY--when ah was little--an' kissed him--
--IT WAS THE FIRST AN' LAST TIME AH KISSED SOMEONE OUT OF PASSION--
--AN' IF AH KISS YOU--AN' IF AH HURT YOU--
--ah know --ah JUST KNOW--
ah'd want to DIE.
THEN WE DON' KISS, ROGUE. SIMPLE AS THAT.
MAYBE THAS' JUS' FINE RIGHT NOW FOR YOU AN' ME.
MAYBE WE BOTH HAVE T' LEARN THERE'S MORE T' LOVE THAN TH' PHYSICAL.
LET ME TAKE THOSE TEARS FROM YOUR EYES, BELLE.
MAYBE THIS WILL WORK EVEN BETTER IN TH' LONG RUN, neh?
MAYBE WE'LL BOTH END UP LEARNIN' WHAT LOVE REALLY MEANS.
AN' I CAN'T THINK 'BOUT ANYONE ELSE I'D RATHER TRY T' LEARN WITH, ROGUE.
REMY--MAH REAL NAME--IT'S--
HUSH. NAMES DON' MEAN NUTHIN' T' ME.
NAMES DON' MAKE US WHAT WE ARE INSIDE.
AN' I KNOW WHAT'S INSIDE YOU, CHERE--
--AN' THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS.

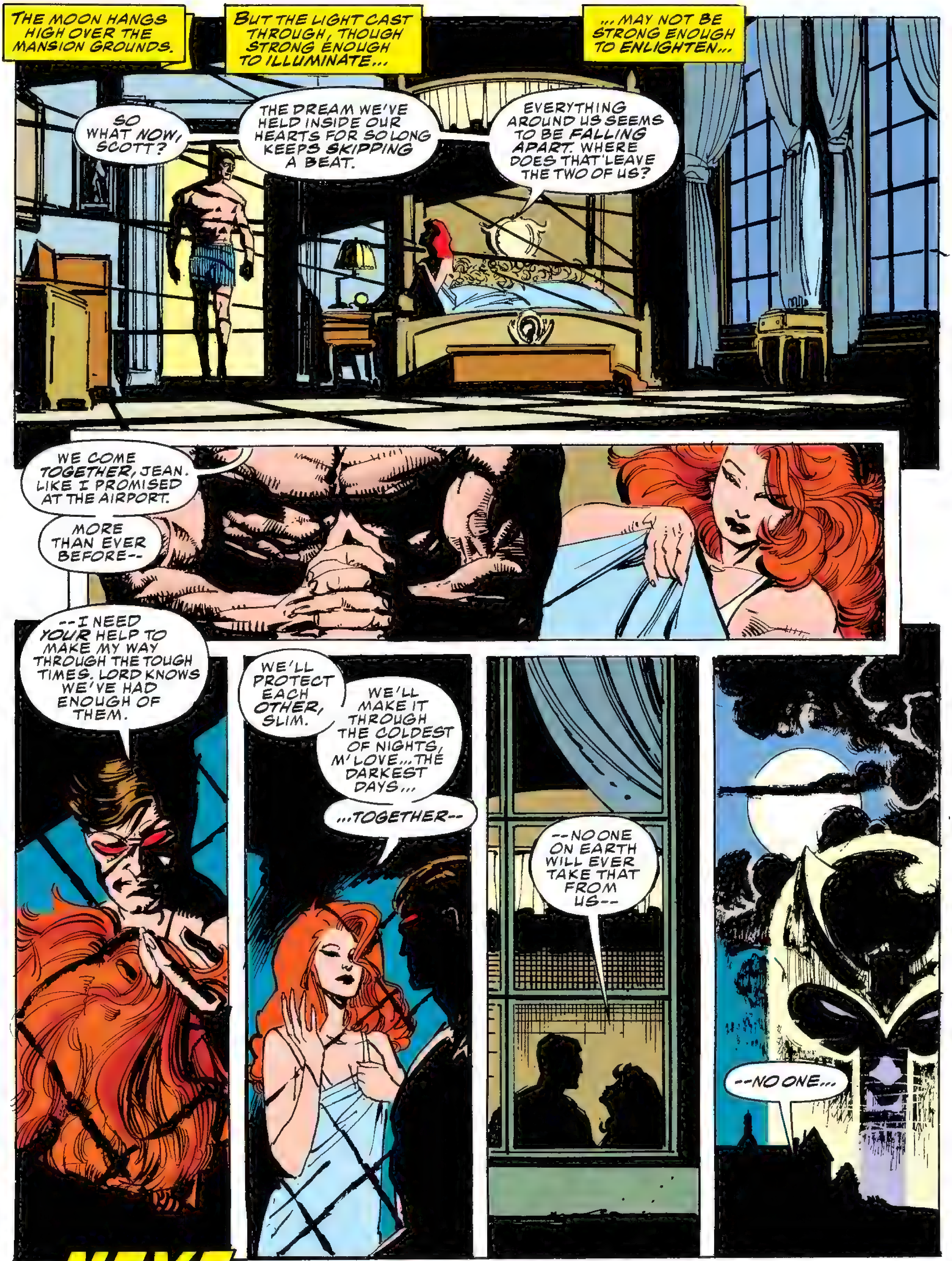

XAVIER'S MANSION. HOW SADLY IRONIC, SEAN CASSIDY THINKS, THAT THE FIRST THING HE HAS TO FACE UPON RETURNING TO THIS LIFE--
--IS YET ANOTHER DEATH.
IS THIS, HE WONDERS, ANY WAY TO BUILD HOPE FOR THE FUTURE?
OR IS THERE REALLY NO OTHER WAY FOR PEOPLE LIKE HIM?
OCH, SEAN, 'TIS A SHAME, A CRUEL JOKE. FOR ALL THE SINS WE'VE COMMITTED IN OUR LIVES, WE KEEP ON LIVIN'--
--WHILE THE YOUNG ONES LIKE JOHN PROUDSTAR, DOUGLAS RAMSEY--
--MY OWN KEVIN--
--AND NOW, POOR ILLYANA--
--PASS ON BEFORE THEY'VE EVEN HAD A CHANCE T'MAKE A MARK ON THIS WORLD.
MORE'N ANYONE I KNOW, ACCUSHLA, YE'VE DONE YOUR SHARE OF HEALIN' AN' SAVIN' LIVES.
HAVE I, SEAN? I KNOW THAT DEATH IS INEVITABLE--A FACT OF LIFE--
I JUST FEEL I'VE SEEN MORE'N MY SHARE OF THE DYING.
AYE. AS HAVE I.
P'RHAPS IT'S TIME BOTH YOU AN' ME STARTED T'THINK A LITTLE BIT LESS--
--ABOUT THE LIVES BEING CUT SHORT--
--AND MORE ABOUT THOSE YOUNG ONES WHO HAVE A GLORIOUS LIFE WORTH LIVING?


THEY MAKE THEIR WAY OUT OF THE MEDI-LAB, A RAY OF HOPE HAVING PIERCED THEIR SOMBER SOULS--
--AND ARE GREETED IN THE STUDY BY FOUR OTHERS--
--WHO HAVE HAD THEIR SHARE OF HOPES AND DREAMS DASHED BEFORE--
--BUT HAVE ALSO ALWAYS MANAGED TO FIND A WAY TO CRAWL FORWARD--THROUGH THE CHALLENGE OF THEIR LIVES--
--WITH THE FIRM BELIEF THAT A GOAL WORTH REACHING--IS WORTH STRIVING FOR.
SEAN, MOIRA... IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU BOTH HERE--
--BOTH HOME AGAIN.
HOME, SCOTT?
WOULD BE NICE TO CALL SOMEPLACE THAT FOR A CHANGE.
YOU ARE ALWAYS WELCOME HERE, SEAN.
WE JUST WISH IT WOULD HAVE BEEN A HAPPIER HOMECOMING, SEAN, BUT WITH ILLYANA'S DEATH AND WHAT I LEARNED IN ALASKA--
--I WONDER IF THAT'LL EVER BE POSSIBLE AGAIN.
SCOTT WAS TELLING US ABOUT AN--ENCOUNTER--HE JUST HAD WITH MR. SINISTER.
ADMITTEDLY, I KNOW LITTLE OF THIS MAN, SCOTT, NEVER HAVING MET HIM.
STILL, GIVEN HIS HISTORY WITH THE X-MEN, I FIND IT HARD TO ACCEPT ANYTHING HE SAYS AS TRUTH.

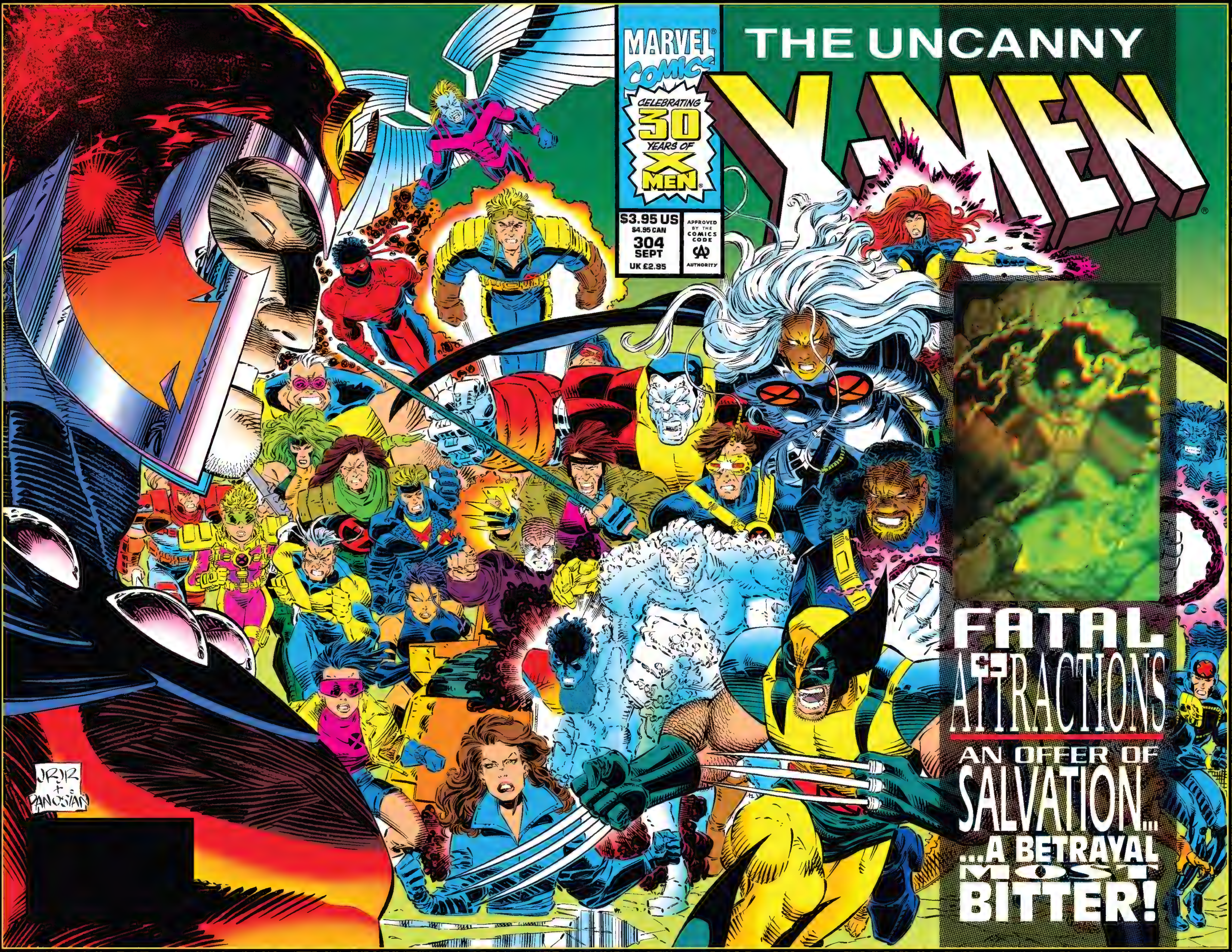
I KNOW THE KIND OF MANIPULATOR HE IS, SIR. HE ALMOST DESTROYED MY LIFE WITH MADELYNE.
BUT I ALSO KNOW THAT THROUGH THE VERBAL ROLLER-COASTER OF LIES AND INNUENDO--
--SINISTER WILL TELL YOU CERTAIN TRUTHS. HIDDEN AND OBSCURE, BUT STILL TRUTHS.
TRUTHS WHICH SUIT HIS OWN ENDS.
PROFESSOR, I'M CONVINCED THE SON WHOSE LIFE I SAVED WHEN I SENT HIM TO THE FUTURE--
--SOMEHOW BECAME THE MUTANT TERRORIST CALLED STRYFE...
...THE VERY SAME MADMAN WHO TRIED TO ASSASSINATE YOU EARLIER THIS YEAR, SIR.
SINISTER TOLD ME THE DISEASE WHICH KILLED ILLYANA IS PART OF STRYFE'S DEADLY LEGACY, A DISEASE UNLEASHED UPON US ALL.
SCOTT, WE STILL NEED TO WAIT FOR THE PROPER TEST RESULTS.
NO SENSE JUMPIN' T' CONCLUSIONS UNTIL WE'VE HAD THE CHANCE TO DO THAT, AT THE LEAST.
AND WHAT HAPPENS IF THE TEST CONFIRMS WHAT SINISTER HAS TOLD SCOTT?
THEN WE DO EVERYTHING IN OUR POWER TO PREVENT THIS VIRUS FROM TURNING INTO A PLAGUE--
--AND TO PREVENT THAT PLAGUE FROM TURNING INTO THE GENOCIDE OF EVERY MUTANT ON THIS PLANET...


OUT BY THE BOATHOUSE ALONG THE SPUYTIN DYVIL COVE, SHE SITS ALONE, ISOLATED IN HER GRIEF.
SHE TELLS HERSELF IT IS BECAUSE NO ONE WOULD UNDERSTAND HER FEELINGS--
--BUT SHE KNOWS THEY WOULD UNDERSTAND ONLY TOO WELL.
THE TRUTH IS, JUBILEE DOESN'T WANT THEM TO SEE HER THIS WAY--
--BECAUSE IF THEY DO, THEN THEY'LL KNOW SHE CAN HURT INSIDE--
--AND THEN THEY'LL KNOW--
--HOW SCARED SHE REALLY IS...
I called her a pimple.
SHE BARELY KNEW ANY ENGLISH--
--SHE DIDN'T GET IT THAT I WAS ONLY RAGGIN' ON HER--
--AN' NOW SHE'S GONE--
--JUST LIKE THAT--
--AN' I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO TELL HER--
--THAT I REALLY LIKED HER--
--WOLVIE-- it's not fair-- it hurts so much--
I TOLD THE PROF A COUPLE'A WEEKS AGO-- THAT I WASN'T SCARED OF DYIN'--
--but I AM, wolvie... I AM...
CRY, GIRL-- IT'S OKAY.
IT AIN'T THE DYIN' YOU SHOULD BE AFRAID OF, JUBILATION. WE ALL DO THAT.
BUT NOT LIVIN' YOUR LIFE T'THE FULLEST BEFORE YOUR TIME--THAT SHOULD FRIGHTEN YOU, GIRL.
AND MORE'N ANYONE ELSE I KNOW, YOU DON'T HAVETA WORRY ABOUT THAT AT ALL...
...NO ONE TAKES A BITE OUT OF LIFE LIKE YOU DO, GIRL...
REMEMBER THAT.


IN THE ROOM OCCUPIED BY PSYLOCKE--
--TWO WOMEN TRY VERY HARD TO COME TO AN UNDERSTANDING--
--ABOUT WHO EACH OF THEM REALLY IS--
--AND PERHAPS, MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHO THEY ARE GOING TO BE.
INTERESTING DECORATIONS FOR A WOMAN BORN AND BRED IN ENGLAND.
IT FELT RIGHT AT THE TIME.
I'M SURE IT DID.
LISTEN, YOU MAY HAVE SUCCESSFULLY WORMED YOUR WAY INTO THIS MANSION--MY HOME--
--AND INTO MY LIFE--AND MAYBE THEY BELIEVE YOU REALLY ARE BETSY BRADDOCK--
AND WHY SHOULDN'T THEY?
PERHAPS THEY BELIEVE THIS TO BE TRUE BECAUSE IT IS.
OR MAYBE KWANNON IN BETSY'S BODY WOULD KNOW HOW TO LIE--TO CHEAT AND STEAL--
--TO ASSASSINATE SOULS AS WELL AS BODIES--
--FAR BETTER THAN BETSY BRADDOCK IN AN ASIAN BODY WOULD?
PERHAPS THAT COULD BE TRUE, AS WELL.
WHO'S TO KNOW FOR SURE?


THE MOON HANGS HIGH OVER THE MANSION GROUNDS.
BUT THE LIGHT CAST THROUGH, THOUGH STRONG ENOUGH TO ILLUMINATE...
...MAY NOT BE STRONG ENOUGH TO ENLIGHTEN...
SO WHAT NOW, SCOTT?
THE DREAM WE'VE HELD INSIDE OUR HEARTS FOR SO LONG KEEPS SKIPPING A BEAT.
EVERYTHING AROUND US SEEMS TO BE FALLING APART. WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE THE TWO OF US?
WE COME TOGETHER, JEAN. LIKE I PROMISED AT THE AIRPORT.
MORE THAN EVER BEFORE--
--I NEED YOUR HELP TO MAKE MY WAY THROUGH THE TOUGH TIMES. LORD KNOWS WE'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THEM.
WE'LL PROTECT EACH OTHER, SLIM.
WE'LL MAKE IT THROUGH THE COLDEST OF NIGHTS, M'LOVE...THE DARKEST DAYS...
...TOGETHER--
--NO ONE ON EARTH WILL EVER TAKE THAT FROM US--
--NO ONE...

NEXT: OUR 25TH ISSUE SPECTACULAR! AN OVERLORD HOVERS ABOVE THE PLANET, AND HE CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO EXIST! THE WAR GETS TAKEN TO MAGNETO-- AN X-MAN FALLS-- AND THE DREAM WILL NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN!!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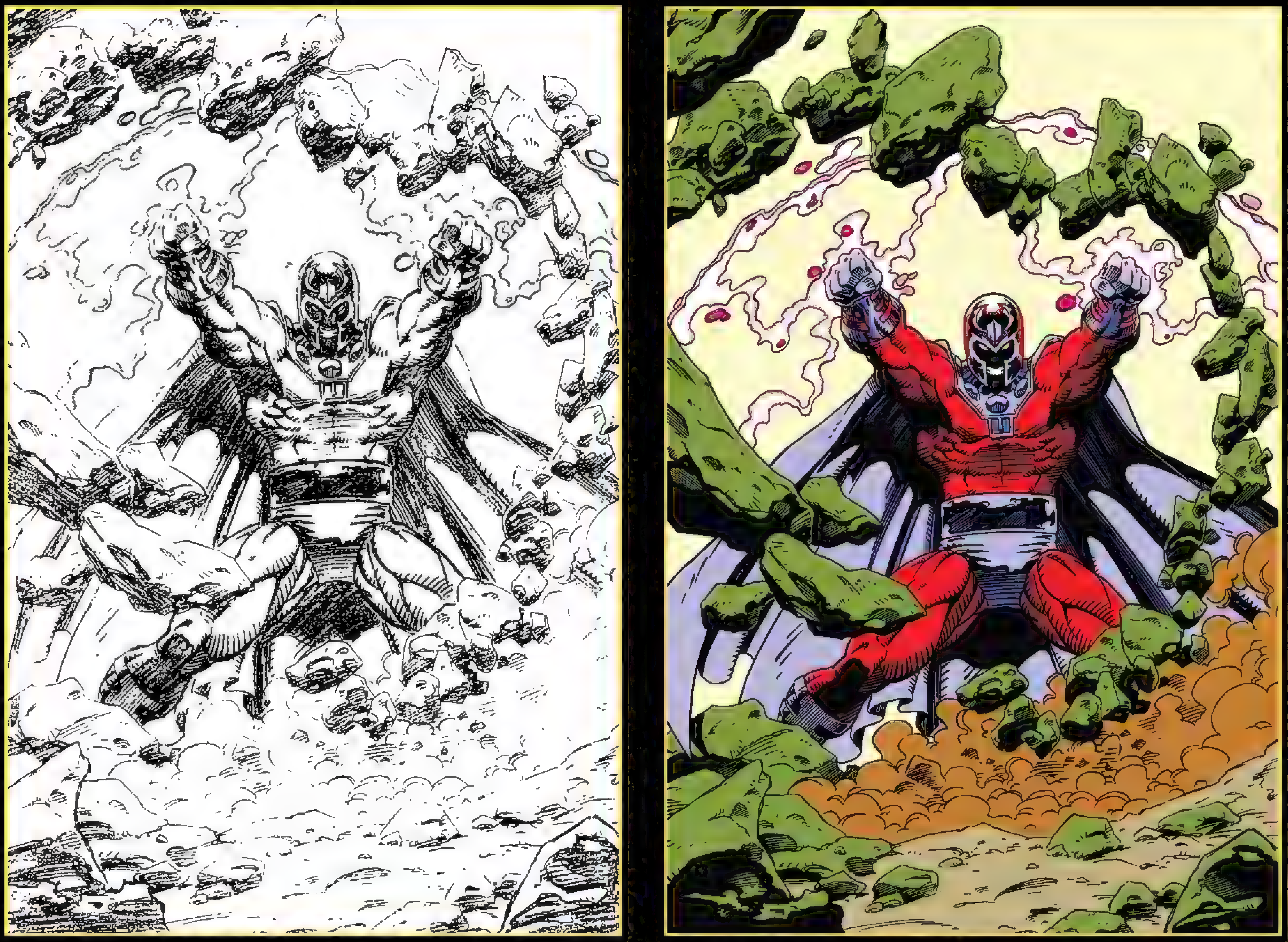
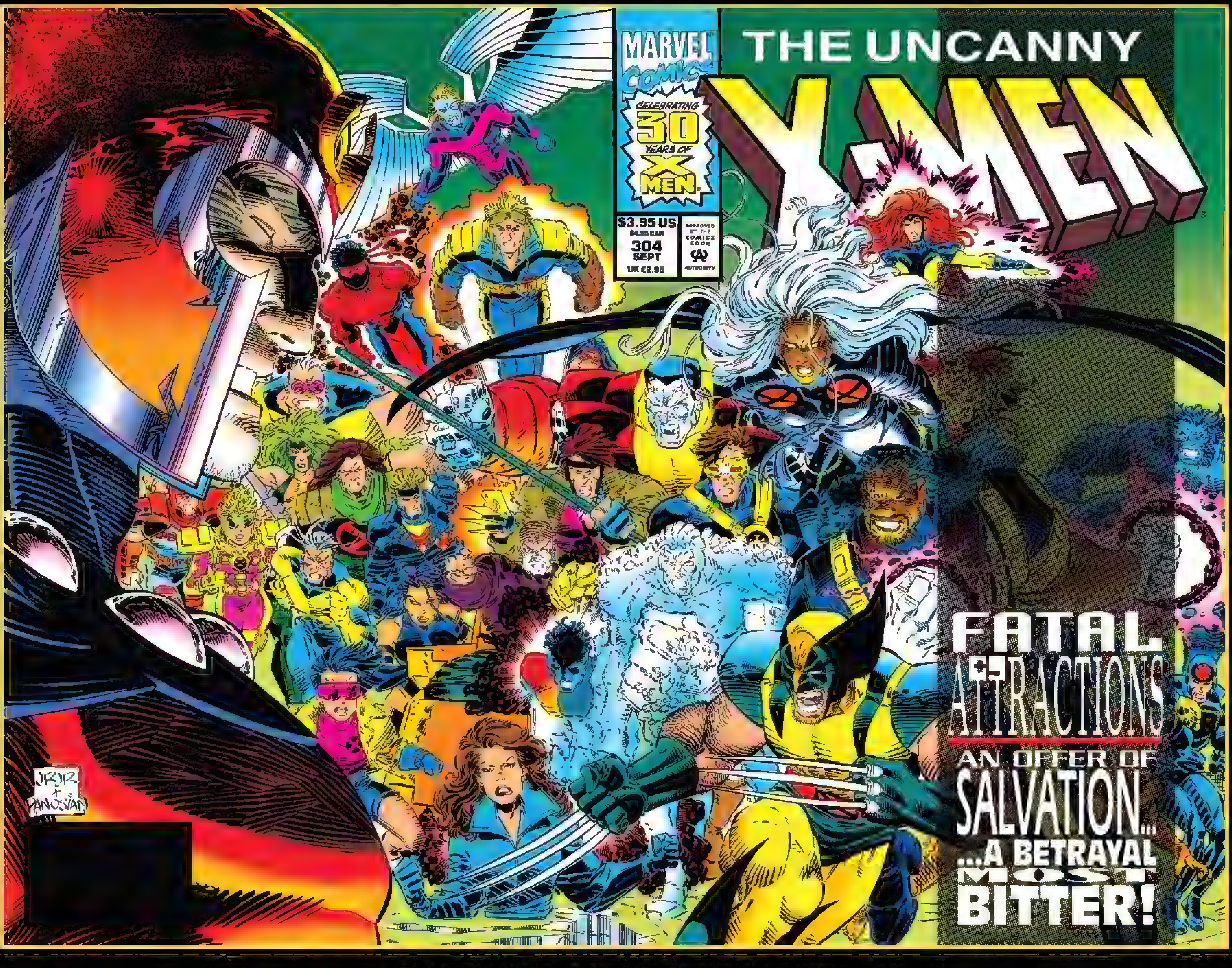


UNCANNY X-MEN #304 HOLOGRAM ORIGINAL PENCILS BY
GREG CAPULLO, AND INKS & COLORS BY KEVIN CONRAD & CARLOS LOPEZ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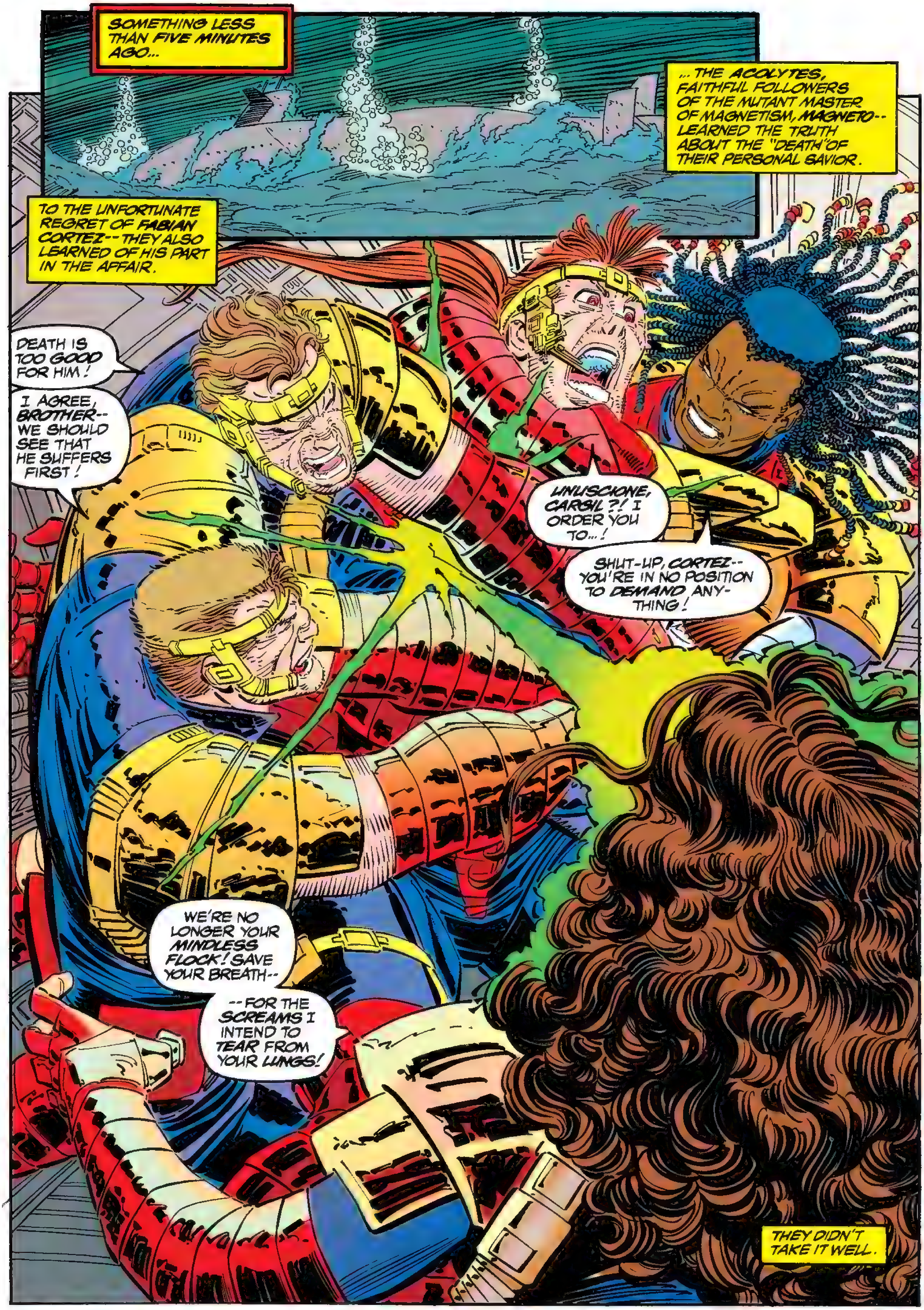
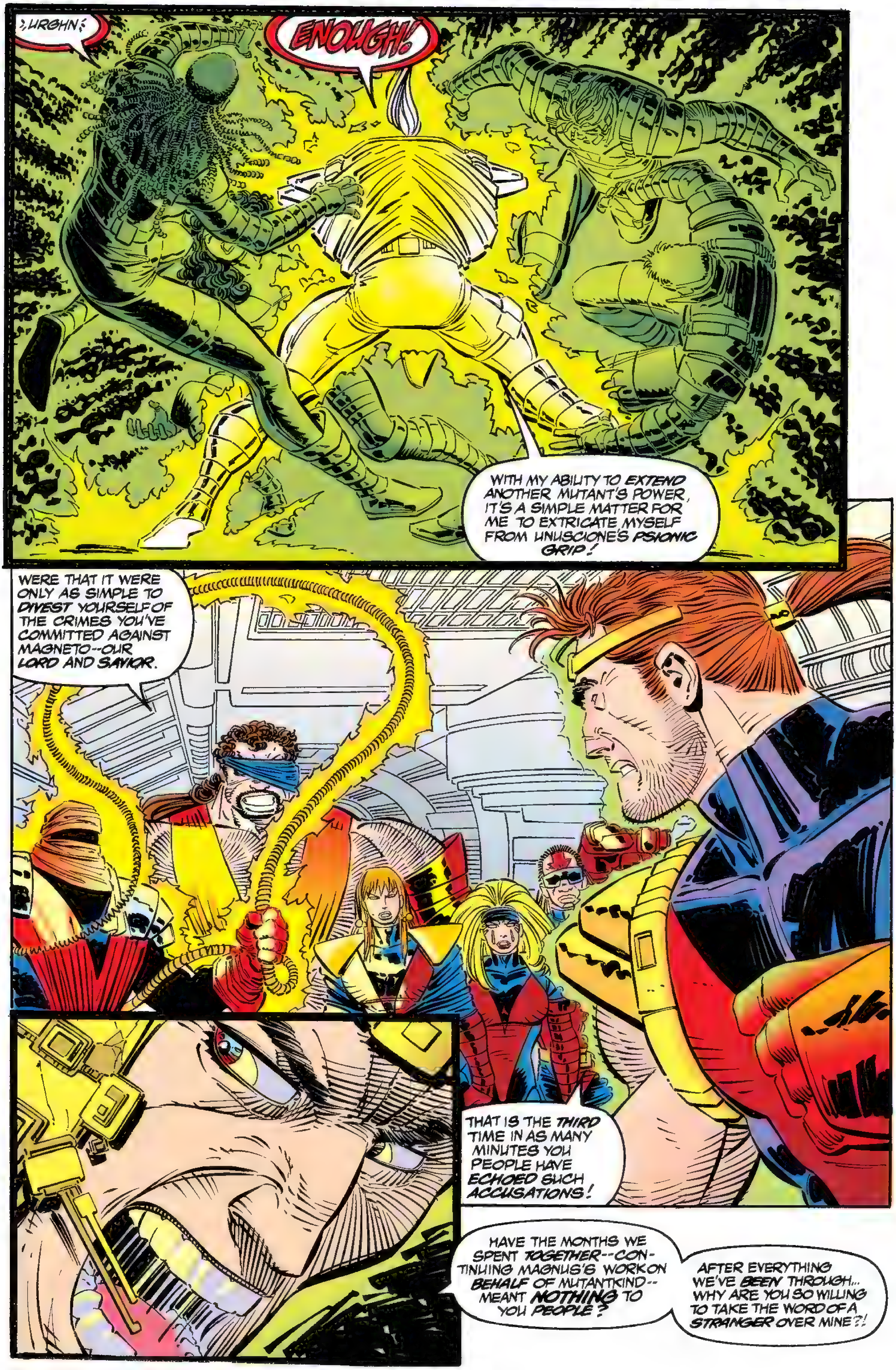
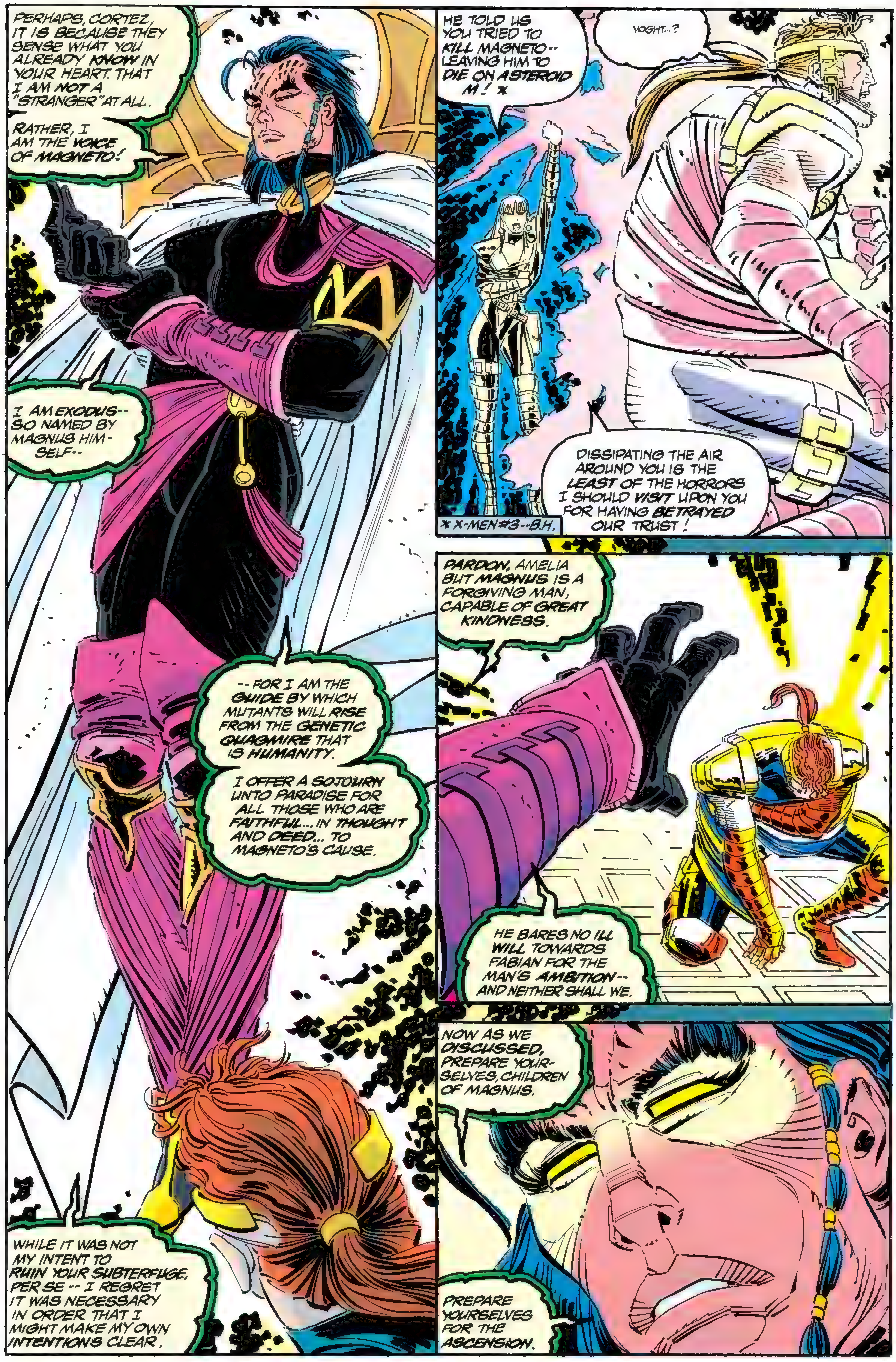
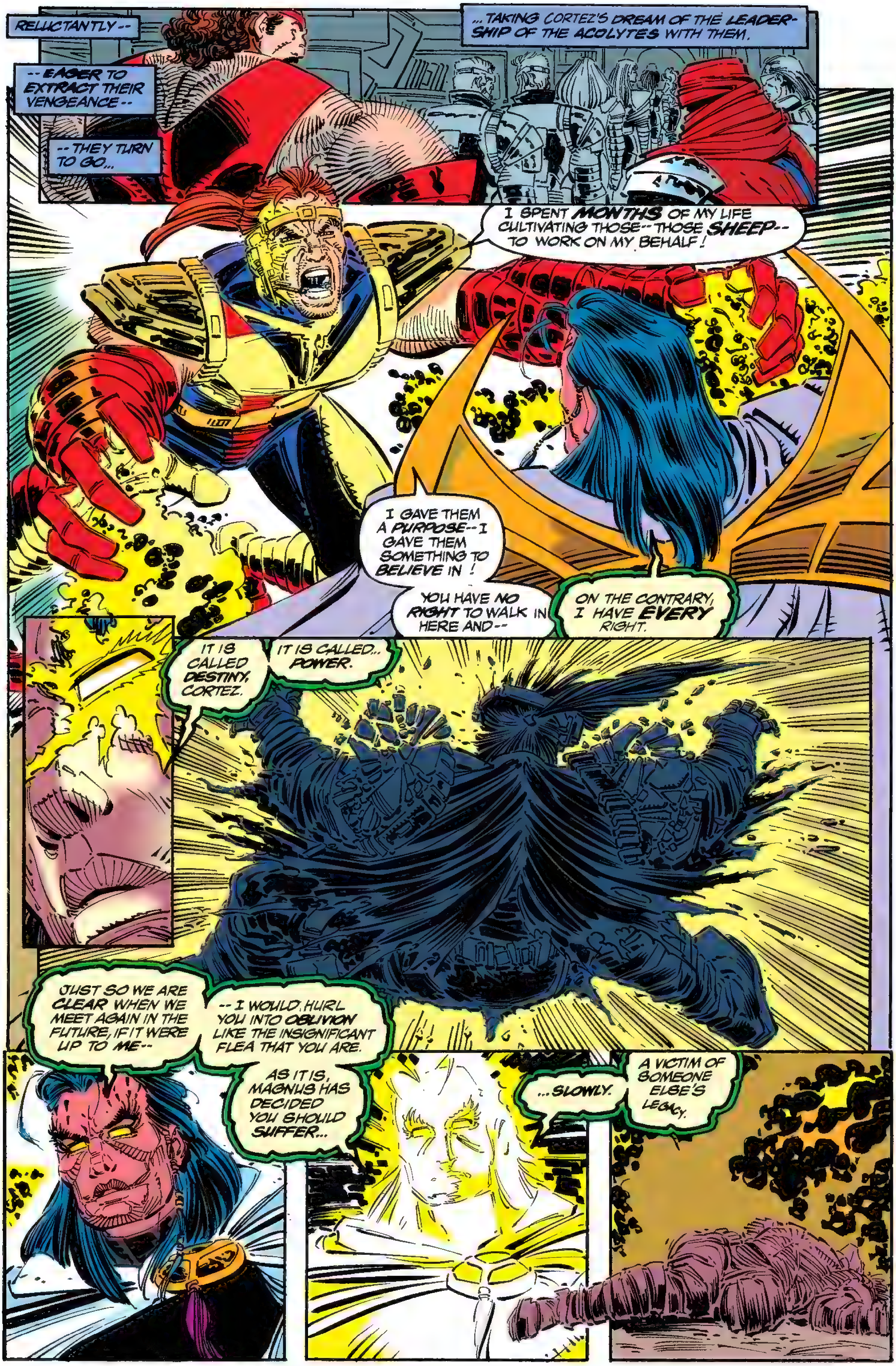
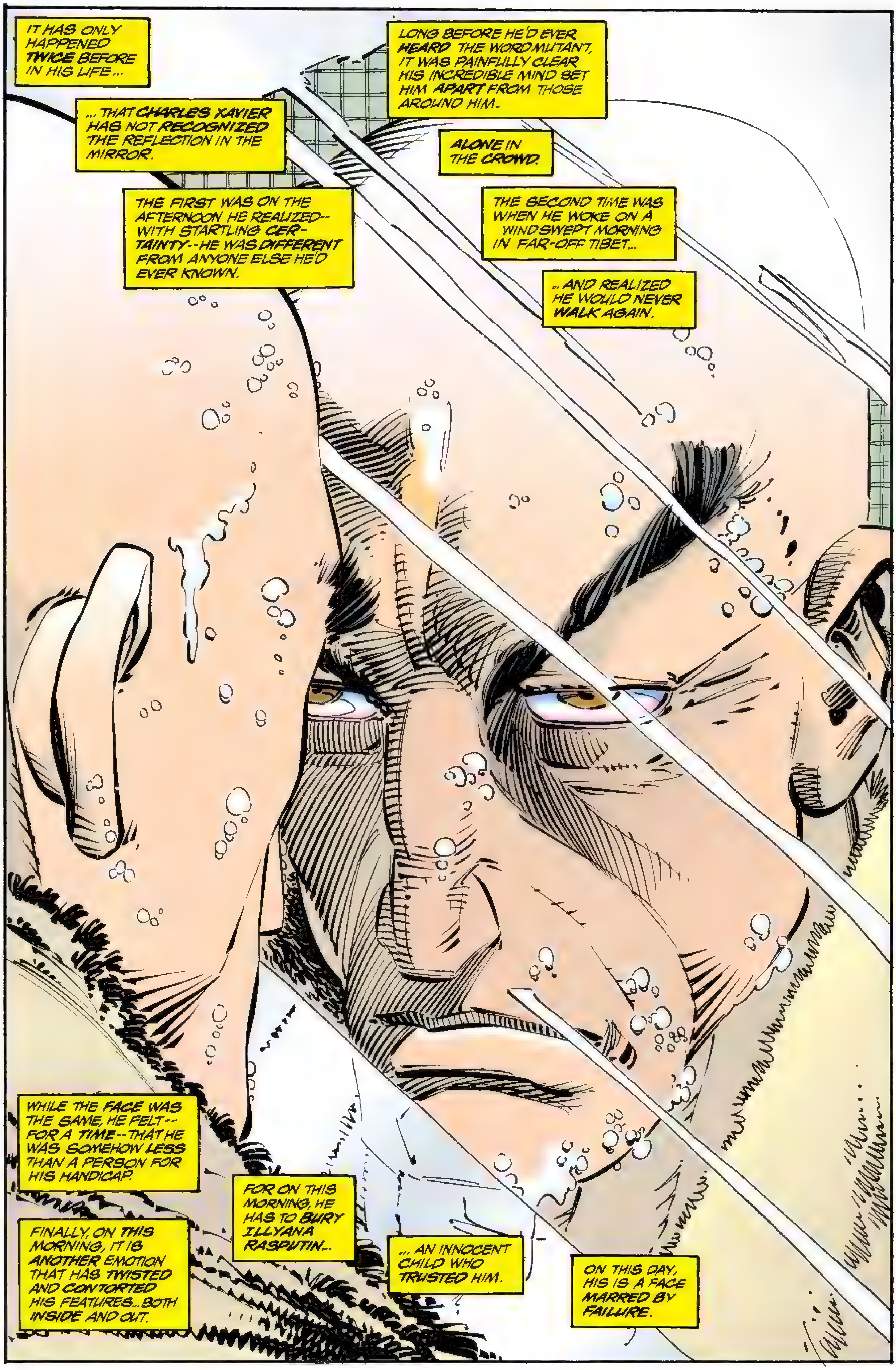
FULL COVER ART WITHOUT HOLOGRAM

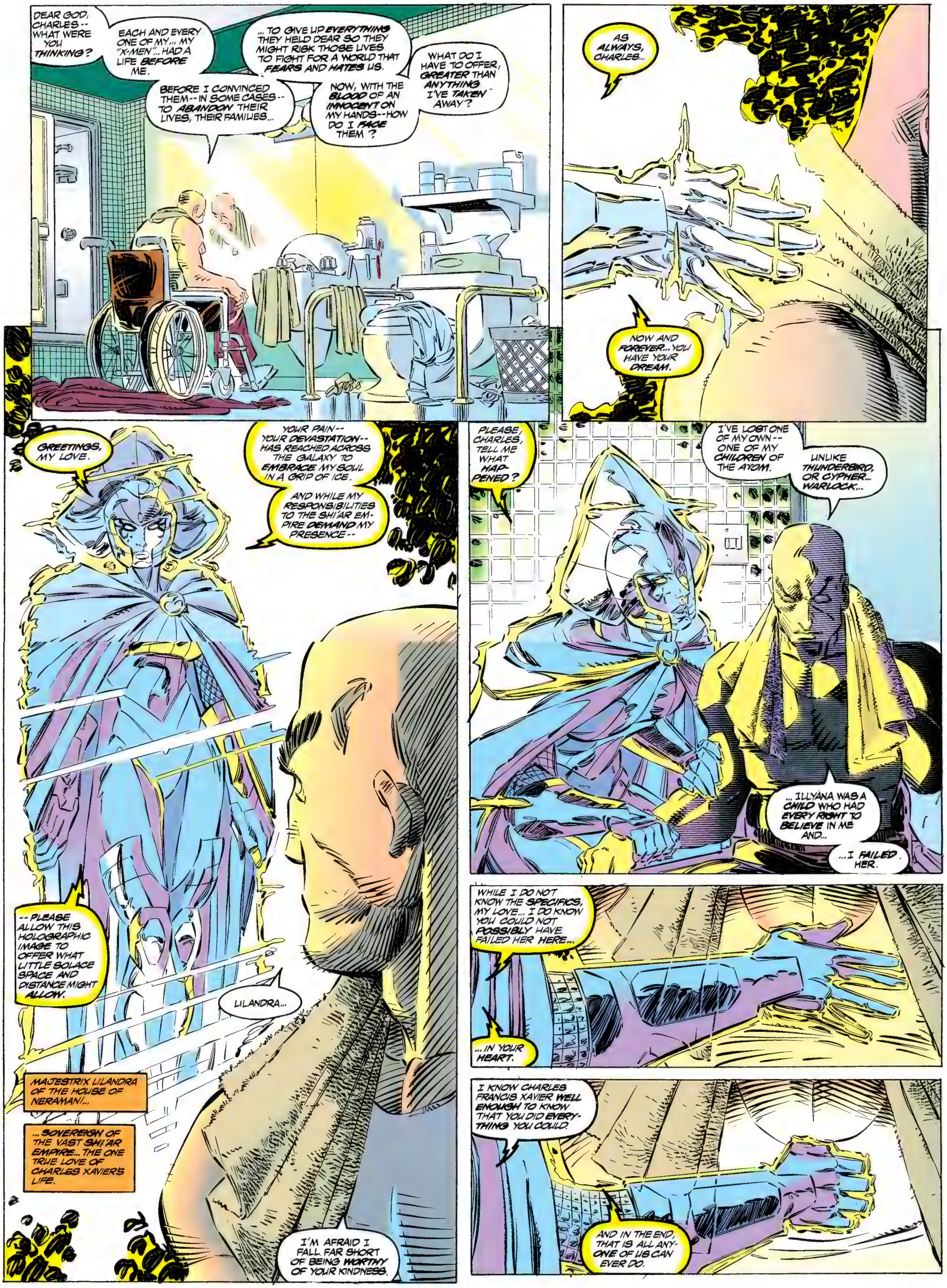

SOMETHING LESS THAN FIVE MINUTES AGO...
...THE ACOLYTES, FAITHFUL FOLLOWERS OF THE MUTANT MASTER OF MAGNETISM, MAGNETO-- LEARNED THE TRUTH ABOUT THE "DEATH" OF THEIR PERSONAL SAVIOR.
TO THE UNFORTUNATE REGRET OF FABIAN CORTEZ-- THEY ALSO LEARNED OF HIS PART IN THE AFFAIR.
DEATH IS TOO GOOD FOR HIM!
I AGREE, BROTHER-- WE SHOULD SEE THAT HE SUFFERS FIRST!
UNUSCIONE, CARSIL?! I ORDER YOU TO...!
SHUT-UP, CORTEZ-- YOU'RE IN NO POSITION TO DEMAND ANYTHING!
WE'RE NO LONGER YOUR MINDLESS FLOCK! SAVE YOUR BREATH--
--FOR THE SCREAMS I INTEND TO TEAR FROM YOUR LUNGS!
THEY DIDN'T TAKE IT WELL.

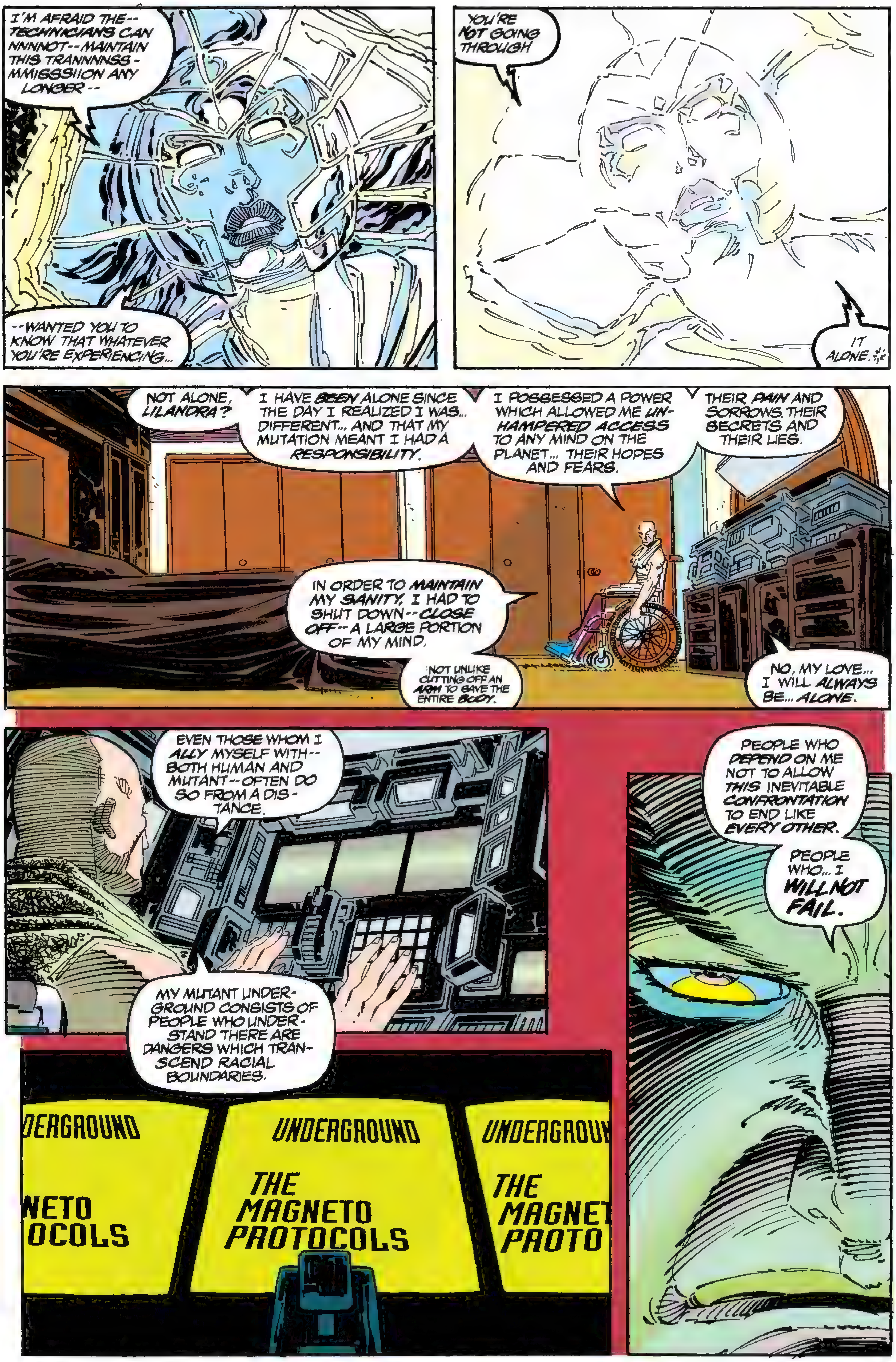

URGHN
ENOUGH!
WITH MY ABILITY TO EXTEND ANOTHER MUTANT'S POWER, IT'S A SIMPLE MATTER FOR ME TO EXTRICATE MYSELF FROM UNUSCIONE'S PSIONIC GRIP!
WERE THAT IT WERE ONLY AS SIMPLE TO DIVEST YOURSELF OF THE CRIMES YOU'VE COMMITTED AGAINST MAGNETO--OUR LORD AND SAVIOR.
THAT IS THE THIRD TIME IN AS MANY MINUTES YOU PEOPLE HAVE ECHOED SUCH ACCUSATIONS!
HAVE THE MONTHS WE SPENT TOGETHER--CONTINUING MAGNUS'S WORK ON BEHALF OF MUTANTKIND--MEANT NOTHING TO YOU PEOPLE?
AFTER EVERYTHING WE'VE BEEN THROUGH... WHY ARE YOU SO WILLING TO TAKE THE WORD OF A STRANGER OVER MINE?!

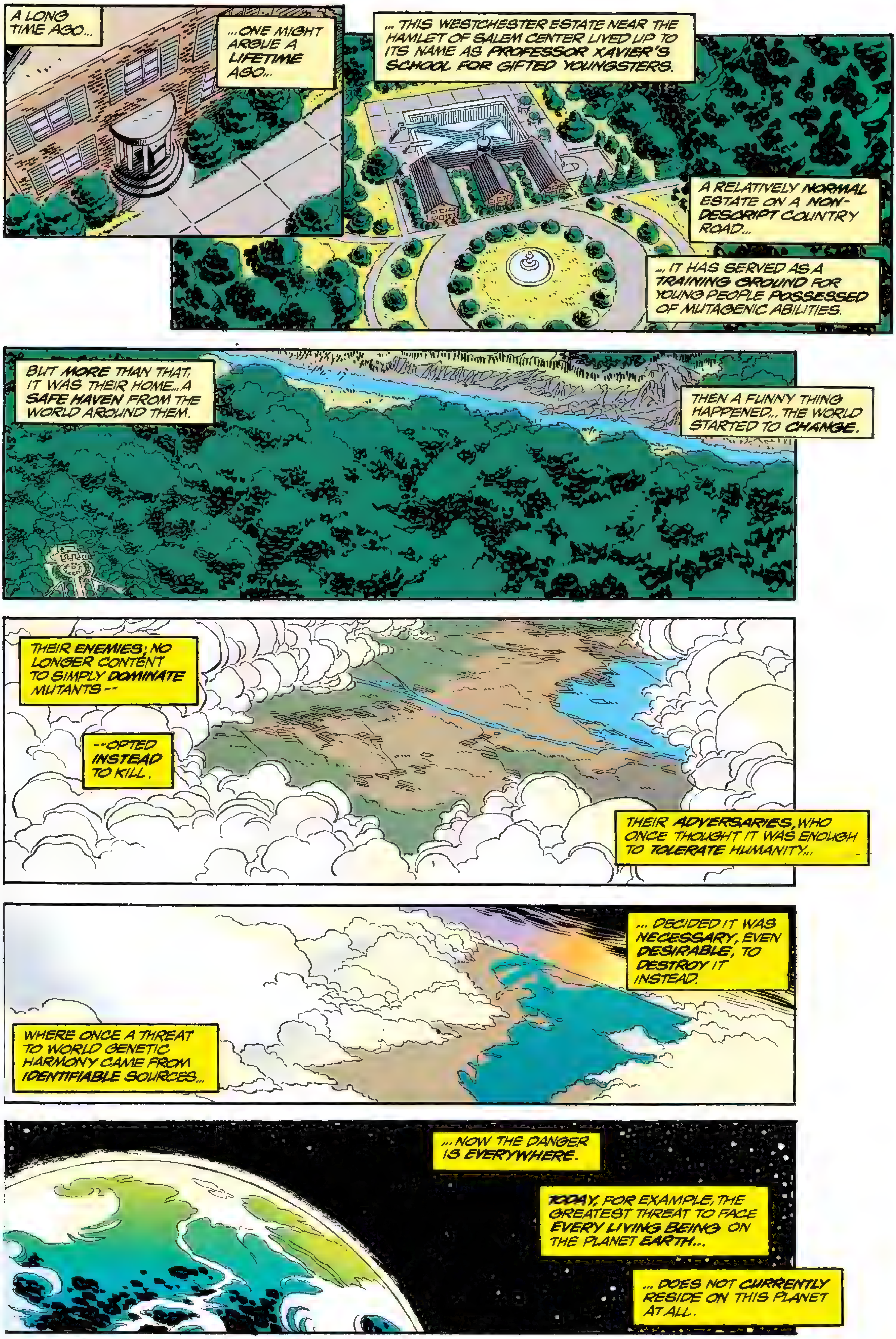

PERHAPS, CORTEZ, IT IS BECAUSE THEY SENSE WHAT YOU ALREADY KNOW IN YOUR HEART. THAT I AM NOT A "STRANGER" AT ALL.
RATHER, I AM THE VOICE OF MAGNETO!
I AM EXODUS-- SO NAMED BY MAGNUS HIMSELF--
--FOR I AM THE GUIDE BY WHICH MUTANTS WILL RISE FROM THE GENETIC QUAGMIRE THAT IS HUMANITY.
I OFFER A SOJOURN UNTO PARADISE FOR ALL THOSE WHO ARE FAITHFUL... IN THOUGHT AND DEED... TO MAGNETO'S CAUSE.
WHILE IT WAS NOT MY INTENT TO RUIN YOUR SUBTERFUGE, PER SE -- I REGRET IT WAS NECESSARY IN ORDER THAT I MIGHT MAKE MY OWN INTENTIONS CLEAR.
HE TOLD US YOU TRIED TO KILL MAGNETO-- LEAVING HIM TO DIE ON ASTEROID M! *
YOGHT...?
DISSIPATING THE AIR AROUND YOU IS THE LEAST OF THE HORRORS I SHOULD VISIT UPON YOU FOR HAVING BETRAYED OUR TRUST!
* X-MEN #3--B.H.
PARDON, AMELIA BUT MAGNUS IS A FORGIVING MAN, CAPABLE OF GREAT KINDNESS.
HE BARES NO ILL WILL TOWARDS FABIAN FOR THE MAN'S AMBITION-- AND NEITHER SHALL WE.
NOW AS WE DISCUSSED, PREPARE YOURSELVES, CHILDREN OF MAGNUS.
PREPARE YOURSELVES FOR THE ASCENSION.

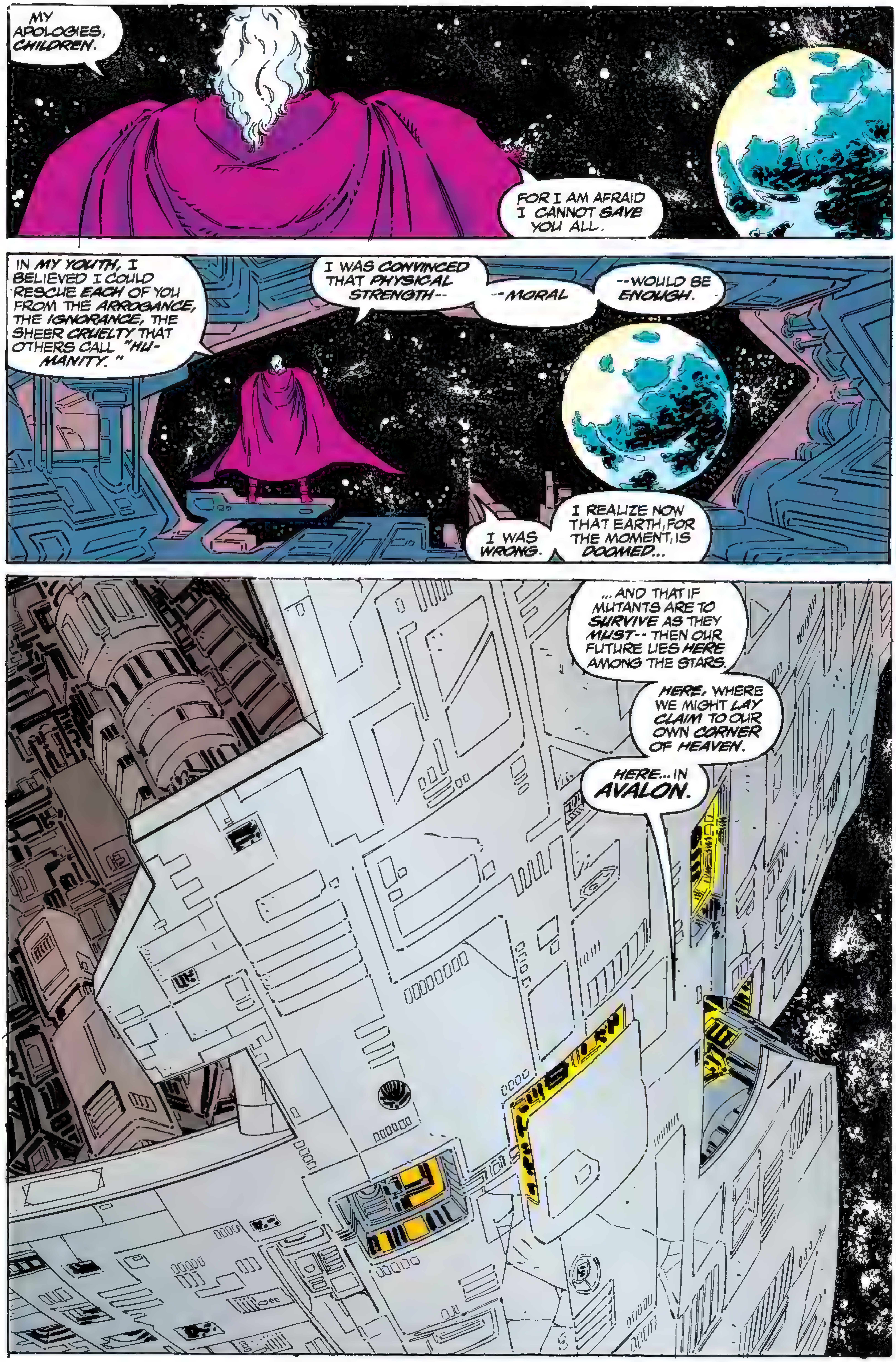

RELUCTANTLY--
--EAGER TO EXTRACT THEIR VENGEANCE--
--THEY TURN TO GO...
...TAKING CORTEZ'S DREAM OF THE LEADERSHIP OF THE ACOLYTES WITH THEM.
I SPENT MONTHS OF MY LIFE CULTIVATING THOSE--THOSE SHEEP--TO WORK ON MY BEHALF!
I GAVE THEM A PURPOSE--I GAVE THEM SOMETHING TO BELIEVE IN!
YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO WALK IN HERE AND--
ON THE CONTRARY, I HAVE EVERY RIGHT.
IT IS CALLED DESTINY, CORTEZ.
IT IS CALLED... POWER.
JUST SO WE ARE CLEAR WHEN WE MEET AGAIN IN THE FUTURE, IF IT WERE UP TO ME--
--I WOULD HURL YOU INTO OBLIVION LIKE THE INSIGNIFICANT FLEA THAT YOU ARE.
AS IT IS, MAGNUS HAS DECIDED YOU SHOULD SUFFER...
...SLOWLY.
A VICTIM OF SOMEONE ELSE'S LEGACY.


IT HAS ONLY HAPPENED TWICE BEFORE IN HIS LIFE...
...THAT CHARLES XAVIER HAS NOT RECOGNIZED THE REFLECTION IN THE MIRROR.
THE FIRST WAS ON THE AFTERNOON HE REALIZED--WITH STARTLING CERTAINTY--HE WAS DIFFERENT FROM ANYONE ELSE HE'D EVER KNOWN.
LONG BEFORE HE'D EVER HEARD THE WORD MUTANT, IT WAS PAINFULLY CLEAR HIS INCREDIBLE MIND SET HIM APART FROM THOSE AROUND HIM.
ALONE IN THE CROWD.
THE SECOND TIME WAS WHEN HE WOKE ON A WINDSWEPT MORNING IN FAR-OFF TIBET...
...AND REALIZED HE WOULD NEVER WALK AGAIN.
WHILE THE FACE WAS THE SAME, HE FELT--FOR A TIME--THAT HE WAS SOMEHOW LESS THAN A PERSON FOR HIS HANDICAP.
FINALLY, ON THIS MORNING, IT IS ANOTHER EMOTION THAT HAS TWISTED AND CONTORTED HIS FEATURES...BOTH INSIDE AND OUT.
FOR ON THIS MORNING, HE HAS TO BURY ILLYANA RASPUTIN...
...AN INNOCENT CHILD WHO TRUSTED HIM.
ON THIS DAY, HIS IS A FACE MARRED BY FAILURE.

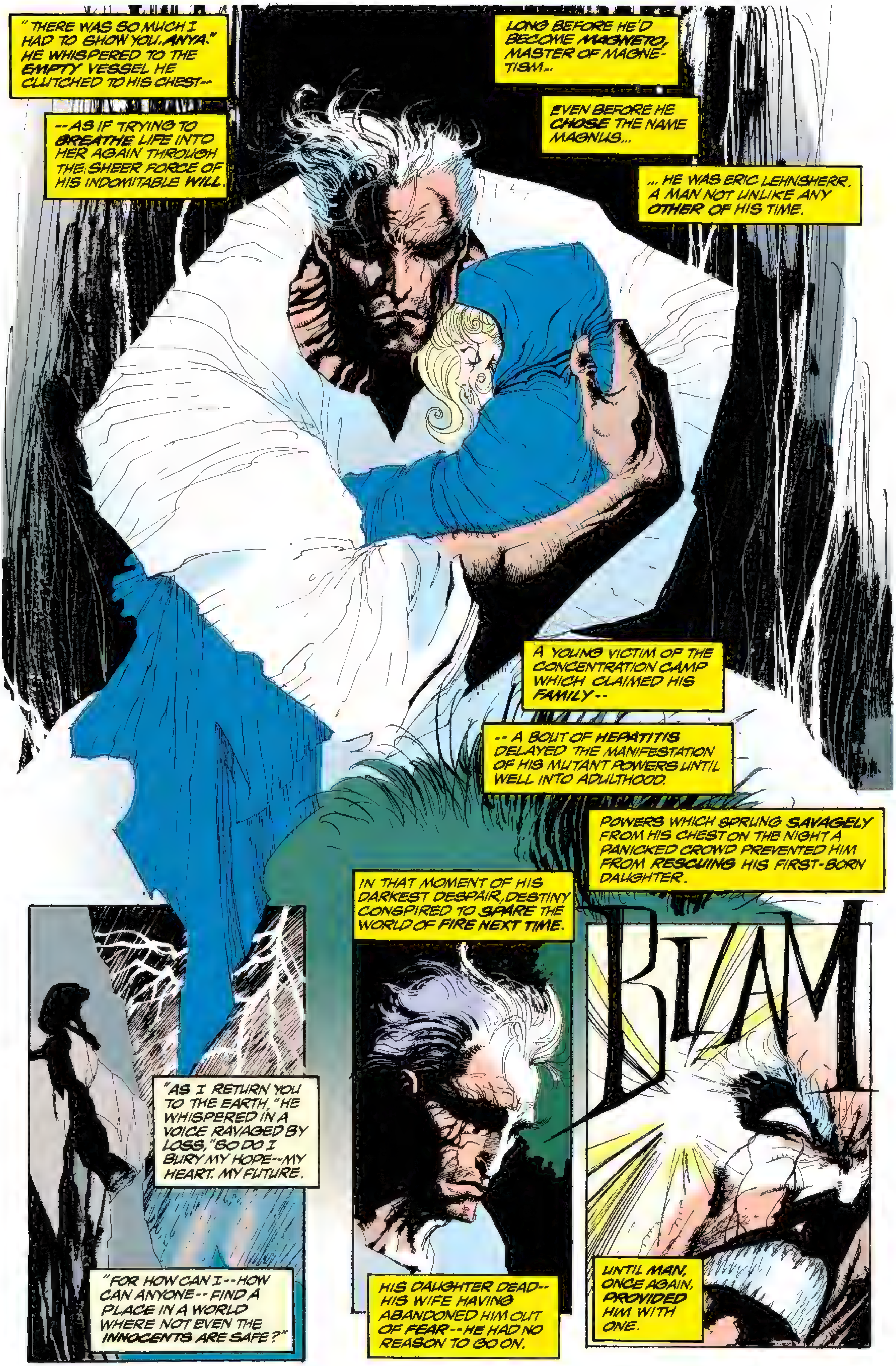

DEAR GOD, CHARLES -- WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?
EACH AND EVERY ONE OF MY... MY "X-MEN"... HAD A LIFE BEFORE ME.
BEFORE I CONVINCED THEM -- IN SOME CASES -- TO ABANDON THEIR LIVES, THEIR FAMILIES...
... TO GIVE UP EVERYTHING THEY HELD DEAR SO THEY MIGHT RISK THOSE LIVES TO FIGHT FOR A WORLD THAT FEARS AND HATES US.
NOW, WITH THE BLOOD OF AN INNOCENT ON MY HANDS -- HOW DO I FACE THEM?
WHAT DO I HAVE TO OFFER, GREATER THAN ANYTHING I'VE TAKEN AWAY?
AS ALWAYS, CHARLES...
NOW AND FOREVER... YOU HAVE YOUR DREAM.
GREETINGS, MY LOVE.
YOUR PAIN -- YOUR DEVASTATION -- HAS REACHED ACROSS THE GALAXY TO EMBRACE MY SOUL IN A GRIP OF ICE.
AND WHILE MY RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE SHI'AR EMPIRE DEMAND MY PRESENCE --
-- PLEASE ALLOW THIS HOLOGRAPHIC IMAGE TO OFFER WHAT LITTLE SOLACE SPACE AND DISTANCE MIGHT ALLOW.
LILANDRA...
MAJESTRIX LILANDRA OF THE HOUSE OF NERAMANI...
... SOVEREIGN OF THE VAST SHI'AR EMPIRE... THE ONE TRUE LOVE OF CHARLES XAVIER'S LIFE.
I'M AFRAID I FALL FAR SHORT OF BEING WORTHY OF YOUR KINDNESS.
PLEASE, CHARLES, TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED?
I'VE LOST ONE OF MY OWN -- ONE OF MY CHILDREN OF THE ATOM.
UNLIKE THUNDERBIRD, OR CYPHER... WARLOCK...
... ILLYANA WAS A CHILD WHO HAD EVERY RIGHT TO BELIEVE IN ME AND...
... I FAILED HER.
WHILE I DO NOT KNOW THE SPECIFICS, MY LOVE... I DO KNOW YOU COULD NOT POSSIBLY HAVE FAILED HER HERE...
... IN YOUR HEART.
I KNOW CHARLES FRANCIS XAVIER WELL ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT YOU DID EVERYTHING YOU COULD.
AND IN THE END, THAT IS ALL ANYONE OF US CAN EVER DO.

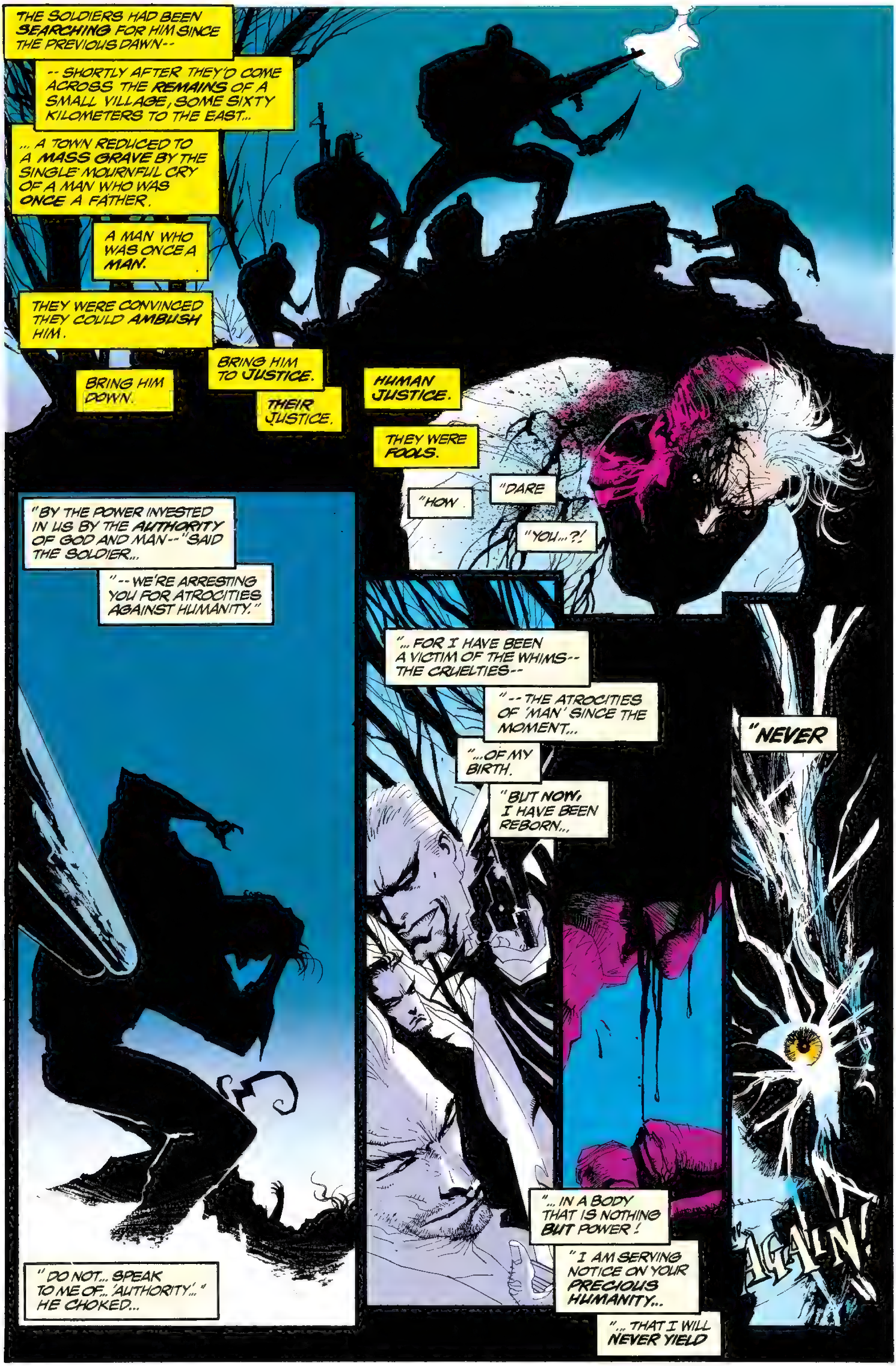

I'M AFRAID THE-- TECHNICIANS CAN NNNNOT--MAINTAIN THIS TRANNNNSS-MMISSSIION ANY LONGER--
--WANTED YOU TO KNOW THAT WHATEVER YOU'RE EXPERIENCING...
YOU'RE NOT GOING THROUGH
IT ALONE.
NOT ALONE, LILANDRA?
I HAVE BEEN ALONE SINCE THE DAY I REALIZED I WAS... DIFFERENT... AND THAT MY MUTATION MEANT I HAD A RESPONSIBILITY.
I POSSESSED A POWER WHICH ALLOWED ME UNHAMPERED ACCESS TO ANY MIND ON THE PLANET... THEIR HOPES AND FEARS.
THEIR PAIN AND SORROWS, THEIR SECRETS AND THEIR LIES.
IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN MY SANITY, I HAD TO SHUT DOWN--CLOSE OFF--A LARGE PORTION OF MY MIND.
NOT UNLIKE CUTTING OFF AN ARM TO SAVE THE ENTIRE BODY.
NO, MY LOVE... I WILL ALWAYS BE... ALONE.
EVEN THOSE WHOM I ALLY MYSELF WITH-- BOTH HUMAN AND MUTANT--OFTEN DO SO FROM A DISTANCE.
MY MUTANT UNDERGROUND CONSISTS OF PEOPLE WHO UNDERSTAND THERE ARE DANGERS WHICH TRANSCEND RACIAL BOUNDARIES.
UNDERGROUND
THE MAGNETO PROTOCOLS
PEOPLE WHO DEPEND ON ME NOT TO ALLOW THIS INEVITABLE CONFRONTATION TO END LIKE EVERY OTHER.
PEOPLE WHO... I WILL NOT FAIL.


A LONG TIME AGO...
...ONE MIGHT ARGUE A LIFETIME AGO...
... THIS WESTCHESTER ESTATE NEAR THE HAMLET OF SALEM CENTER LIVED UP TO ITS NAME AS PROFESSOR XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS.
A RELATIVELY NORMAL ESTATE ON A NON-DESCRIPT COUNTRY ROAD...
... IT HAS SERVED AS A TRAINING GROUND FOR YOUNG PEOPLE POSSESSED OF MUTAGENIC ABILITIES.
BUT MORE THAN THAT, IT WAS THEIR HOME... A SAFE HAVEN FROM THE WORLD AROUND THEM.
THEN A FUNNY THING HAPPENED... THE WORLD STARTED TO CHANGE.
THEIR ENEMIES; NO LONGER CONTENT TO SIMPLY DOMINATE MUTANTS --
--OPTED INSTEAD TO KILL.
THEIR ADVERSARIES, WHO ONCE THOUGHT IT WAS ENOUGH TO TOLERATE HUMANITY...
... DECIDED IT WAS NECESSARY, EVEN DESIRABLE, TO DESTROY IT INSTEAD.
WHERE ONCE A THREAT TO WORLD GENETIC HARMONY CAME FROM IDENTIFIABLE SOURCES...
... NOW THE DANGER IS EVERYWHERE.
TODAY, FOR EXAMPLE, THE GREATEST THREAT TO FACE EVERY LIVING BEING ON THE PLANET EARTH...
... DOES NOT CURRENTLY RESIDE ON THIS PLANET AT ALL.

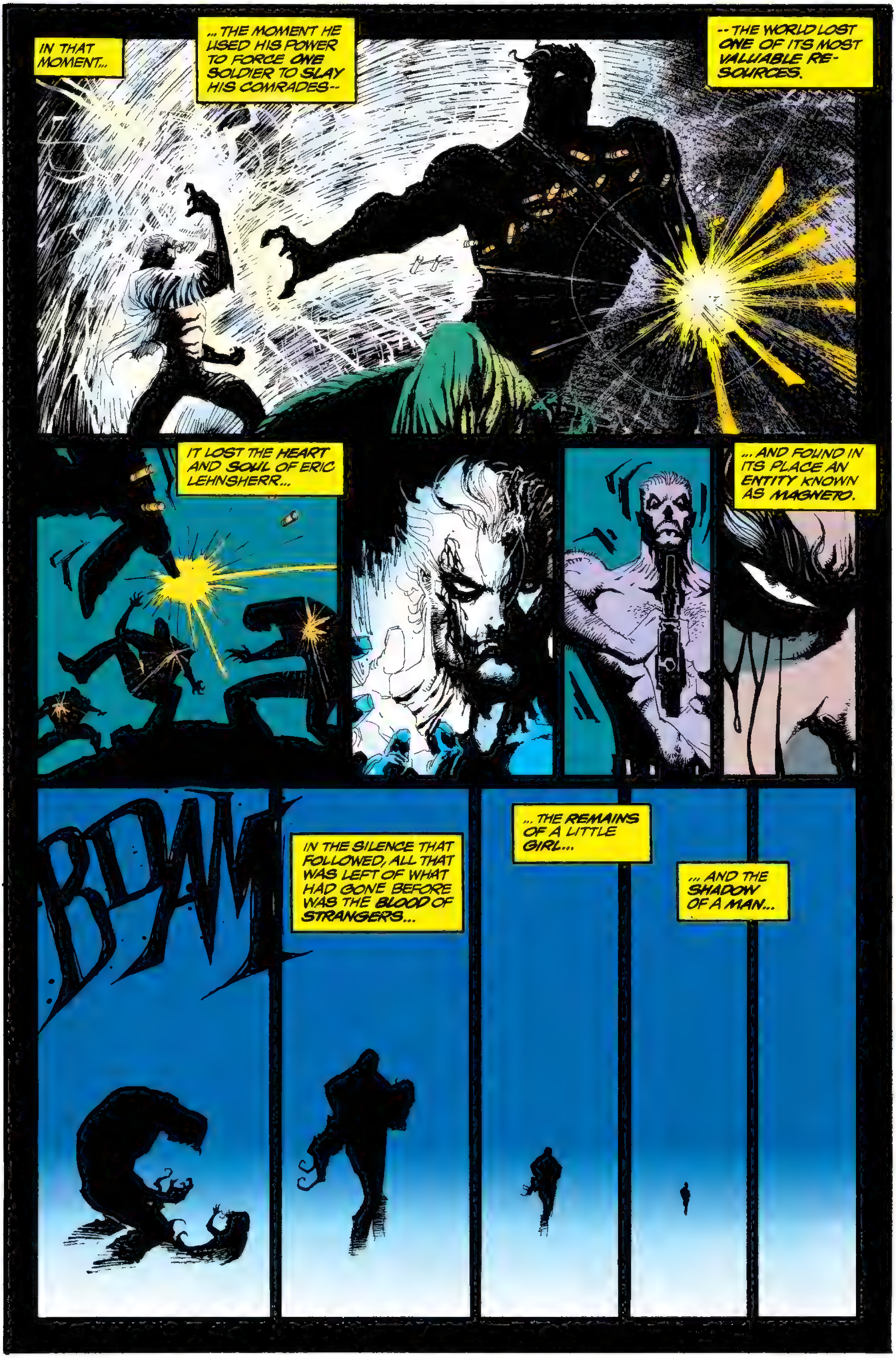

MY APOLOGIES, CHILDREN.
FOR I AM AFRAID I CANNOT SAVE YOU ALL.
IN MY YOUTH, I BELIEVED I COULD RESCUE EACH OF YOU FROM THE ARROGANCE, THE IGNORANCE, THE SHEER CRUELTY THAT OTHERS CALL "HUMANITY."
I WAS CONVINCED THAT PHYSICAL STRENGTH--
--MORAL
--WOULD BE ENOUGH.
I WAS WRONG.
I REALIZE NOW THAT EARTH, FOR THE MOMENT, IS DOOMED...
...AND THAT IF MUTANTS ARE TO SURVIVE AS THEY MUST-- THEN OUR FUTURE LIES HERE AMONG THE STARS.
HERE, WHERE WE MIGHT LAY CLAIM TO OUR OWN CORNER OF HEAVEN.
HERE... IN AVALON.

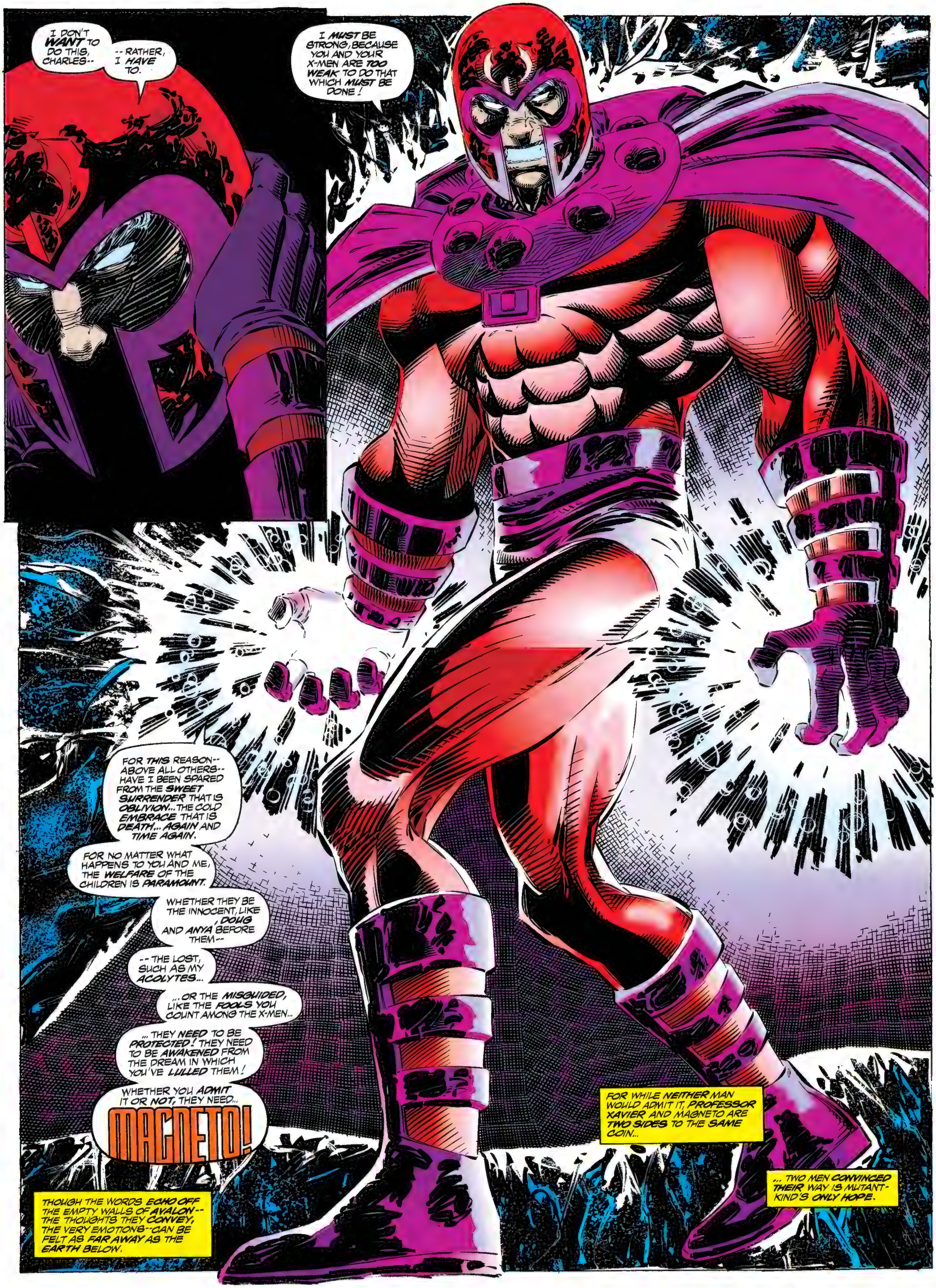
THERE WAS A TIME WHEN THIS MAN WOULD HAVE SCOFFED AT THE THOUGHT OF TALKING TO HIMSELF.
BUT THAT TOO HAS CHANGED.
IT MAY HAVE CHANGED ON THE NIGHT HE "DIED" ON A FLAMING ASTEROID AS IT PLUNGED INTO EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE...
... WHEN THE ACOLYTE CALLED CHROME TRANSMUTED THIS MAN'S CRITICALLY WOUNDED BODY INTO OMNIUM--
--INSURING HE'D SURVIVE THE FIERY CRASH TO EARTH.
HIS BENEFACTOR DIED, SO THAT HE MAY LIVE.
BUT FAR MORE LIKELY IT ALL CHANGED ON THE NIGHT, DECADES EARLIER, WHEN HE LOST THE ONE GREAT LOVE OF HIS LIFE...
... THE ONLY THING HE EVER TRULY CREATED IN A LIFE THAT HAS SINCE, IT SEEMS, BEEN ABOUT NOTHING MORE THAN DEATH AND DESTRUCTION.
TRUE, IT IS DESTRUCTION IN THE SAME WAY A BLANK CANVAS IS SCARRED BY A SWATH OF PAINT...
... BUT IT IS DESTRUCTION NONETHELESS.
THAT MUCH, AT LEAST... HIS NEED TO DESTROY IN ORDER TO CREATE...
... FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE...
... HAS NOT CHANGED.


"THERE WAS SO MUCH I HAD TO SHOW YOU, ANYA." HE WHISPERED TO THE EMPTY VESSEL HE CLUTCHED TO HIS CHEST--
--AS IF TRYING TO BREATHE LIFE INTO HER AGAIN THROUGH THE SHEER FORCE OF HIS INDOMITABLE WILL.
LONG BEFORE HE'D BECOME MAGNETO, MASTER OF MAGNETISM...
EVEN BEFORE HE CHOSE THE NAME MAGNUS...
...HE WAS ERIC LEHNSHERR. A MAN NOT UNLIKE ANY OTHER OF HIS TIME.
A YOUNG VICTIM OF THE CONCENTRATION CAMP WHICH CLAIMED HIS FAMILY--
-- A BOUT OF HEPATITIS DELAYED THE MANIFESTATION OF HIS MUTANT POWERS UNTIL WELL INTO ADULTHOOD.
POWERS WHICH SPRUNG SAVAGELY FROM HIS CHEST ON THE NIGHT A PANICKED CROWD PREVENTED HIM FROM RESCUING HIS FIRST-BORN DAUGHTER.
IN THAT MOMENT OF HIS DARKEST DESPAIR, DESTINY CONSPIRED TO SPARE THE WORLD OF FIRE NEXT TIME.
"AS I RETURN YOU TO THE EARTH," HE WHISPERED IN A VOICE RAVAGED BY LOSS, "SO DO I BURY MY HOPE--MY HEART. MY FUTURE.
"FOR HOW CAN I--HOW CAN ANYONE--FIND A PLACE IN A WORLD WHERE NOT EVEN THE INNOCENTS ARE SAFE?"
HIS DAUGHTER DEAD-- HIS WIFE HAVING ABANDONED HIM OUT OF FEAR--HE HAD NO REASON TO GO ON.
BLAM
UNTIL MAN, ONCE AGAIN, PROVIDED HIM WITH ONE.

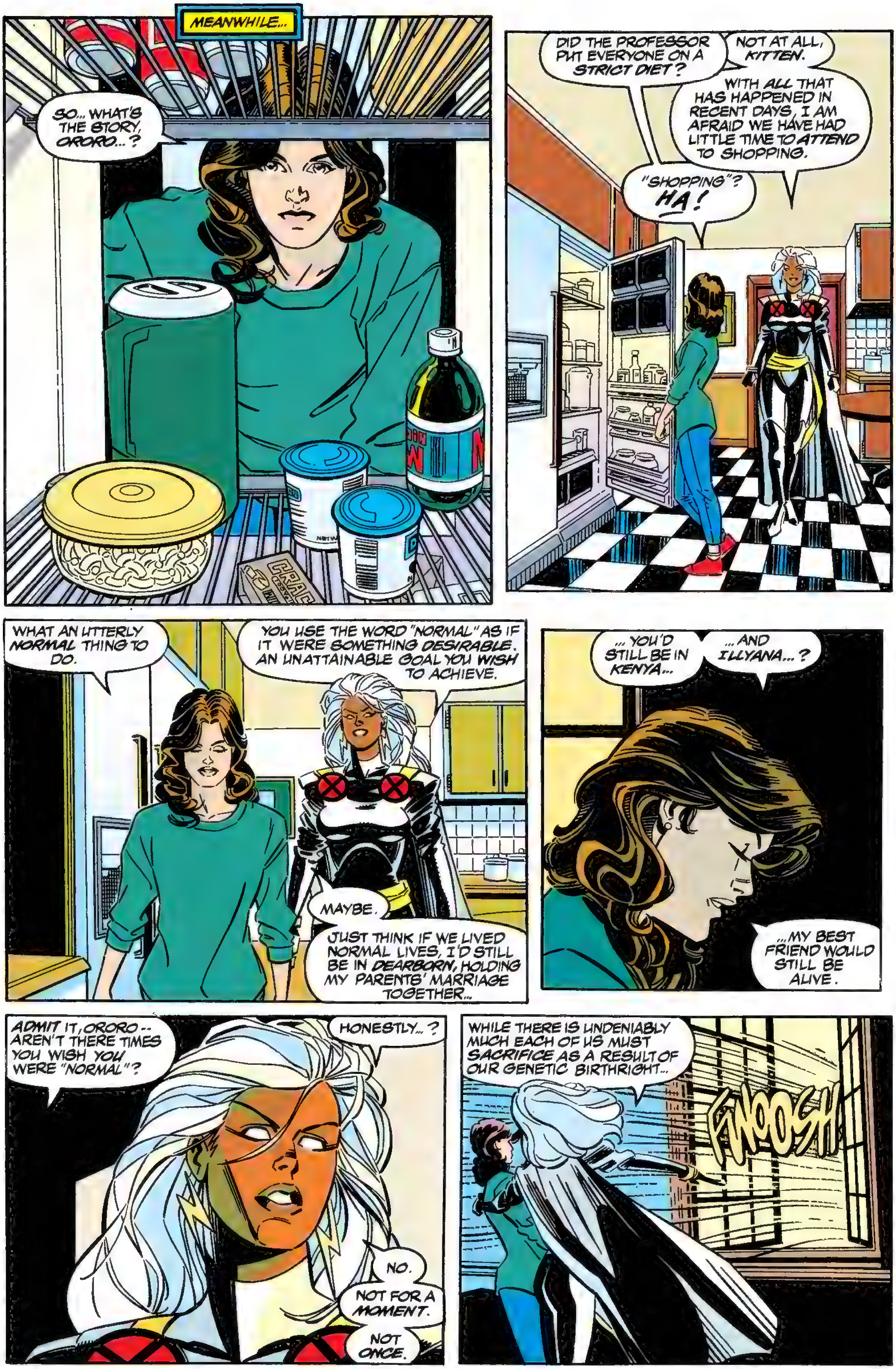

THE SOLDIERS HAD BEEN SEARCHING FOR HIM SINCE THE PREVIOUS DAWN--
-- SHORTLY AFTER THEY'D COME ACROSS THE REMAINS OF A SMALL VILLAGE, SOME SIXTY KILOMETERS TO THE EAST...
... A TOWN REDUCED TO A MASS GRAVE BY THE SINGLE MOURNFUL CRY OF A MAN WHO WAS ONCE A FATHER.
A MAN WHO WAS ONCE A MAN.
THEY WERE CONVINCED THEY COULD AMBUSH HIM.
BRING HIM DOWN.
BRING HIM TO JUSTICE.
THEIR JUSTICE.
HUMAN JUSTICE.
THEY WERE FOOLS.
"BY THE POWER INVESTED IN US BY THE AUTHORITY OF GOD AND MAN--" SAID THE SOLDIER...
"-- WE'RE ARRESTING YOU FOR ATROCITIES AGAINST HUMANITY."
"DO NOT... SPEAK TO ME OF... 'AUTHORITY'..." HE CHOKED...
"HOW
"DARE
"YOU...?!
"... FOR I HAVE BEEN A VICTIM OF THE WHIMS-- THE CRUELTIES--
"-- THE ATROCITIES OF 'MAN' SINCE THE MOMENT...
"...OF MY BIRTH.
"BUT NOW, I HAVE BEEN REBORN...
"... IN A BODY THAT IS NOTHING BUT POWER!
"I AM SERVING NOTICE ON YOUR PRECIOUS HUMANITY...
"... THAT I WILL NEVER YIELD
"NEVER
AGAIN!

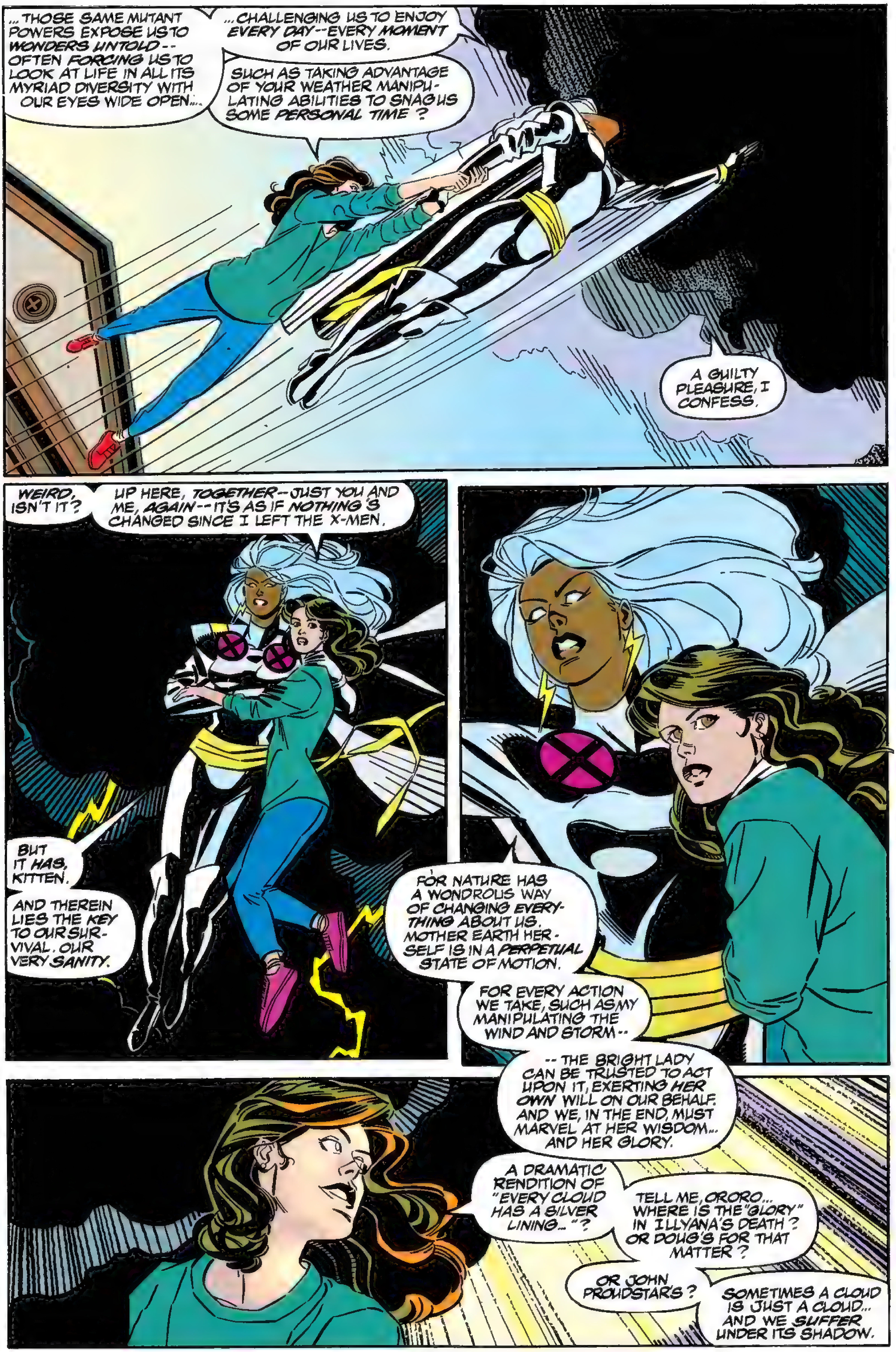
THE FIRST TIME HE HAD USED HIS POWER--IT WAS UNTHINKING, AS MUCH A SHOCK TO HIM AS TO THE VICTIMS OF ITS INITIAL MANIFESTATION.
A PRIMAL CRY OF FRUSTRATION--OF MISDIRECTED AGGRESSION--AGAINST THE PEOPLE WHO HAD ALLOWED HIS DAUGHTER TO DIE.
THUS, HE MIGHT HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN HIS INITIAL CRIME OF PASSION.
BUT ON THIS EVENING, HIS ACTIONS WERE DELIBERATE.
THEY WERE THE ACTIONS OF A MAN WHO COULD NO MORE OF THE AFFRONTS TO HIS PERSONAL DIGNITY--
--TO EVERYTHING HE'D ONCE HAD AND LOST.
A MAN WHO FOUND IT WITHIN HIMSELF TO REACH INTO THE VERY HEART OF THE PLANET--
--AND USE WHAT HE FOUND THERE TO SMITE HIS ENEMIES.
"I SPENT MY CHILDHOOD UNDER THE OPPRESSION OF OTHERS!" HE RAGED--
--HIS VOICE NEARLY DROWNED BY THE PLAINTIVE WAIL OF THE EARTH MOLESTED BY HIS INTIMATE MANIPULATIONS.
"AS AN ADULT, I WILL NOT STAND BY AND LET OTHERS--
"--THOSE YOU HAVE ARBITRARILY DECIDED ARE SOMEHOW 'UNWORTHY,' 'UNDESERVING'--
"--SUFFER AS I HAVE SUFFERED BEFORE THEM!"

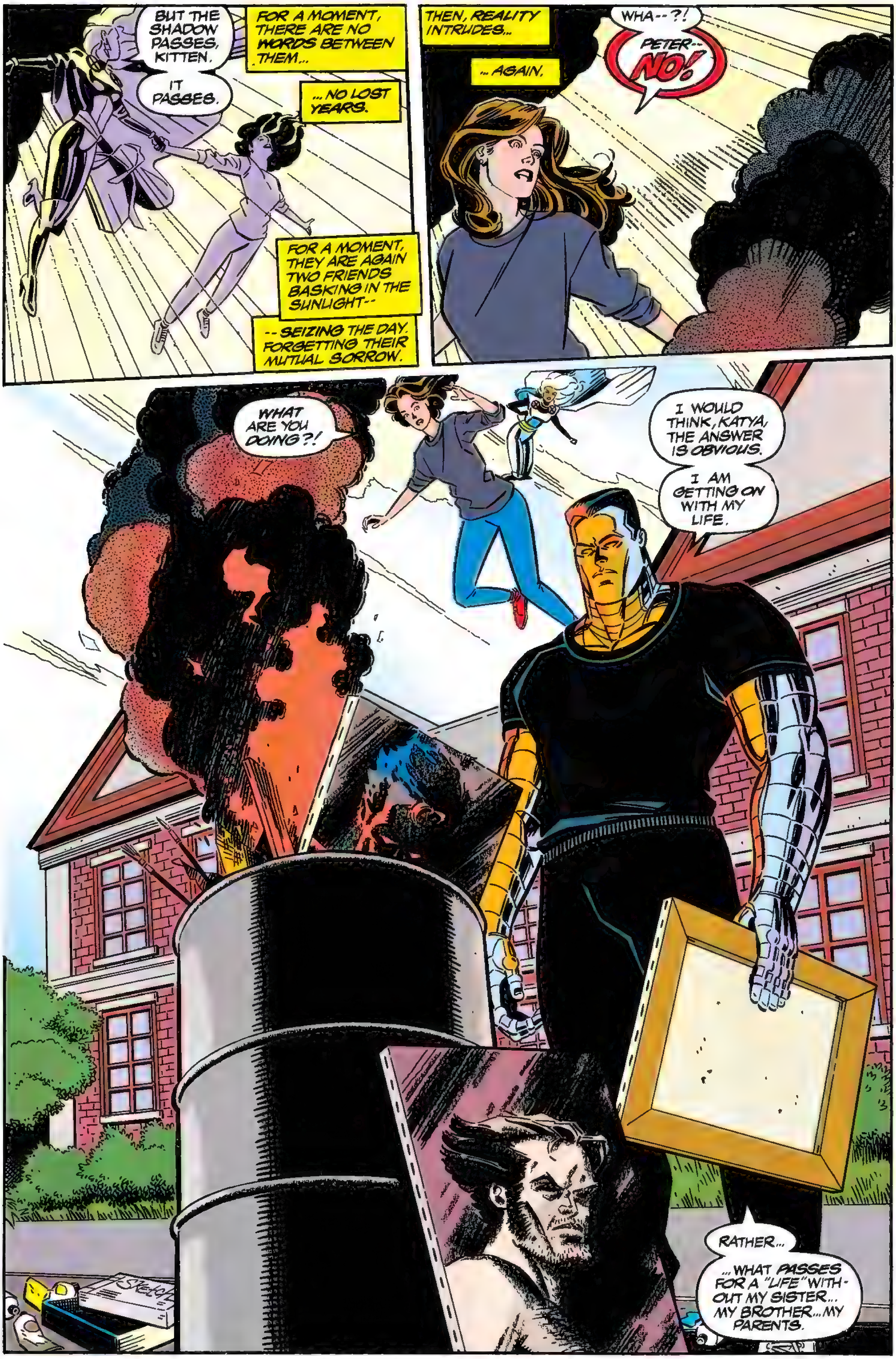

IN THAT MOMENT...
...THE MOMENT HE USED HIS POWER TO FORCE ONE SOLDIER TO SLAY HIS COMRADES--
--THE WORLD LOST ONE OF ITS MOST VALUABLE RESOURCES.
IT LOST THE HEART AND SOUL OF ERIC LEHNSHERR...
...AND FOUND IN ITS PLACE AN ENTITY KNOWN AS MAGNETO.
BDAM
IN THE SILENCE THAT FOLLOWED, ALL THAT WAS LEFT OF WHAT HAD GONE BEFORE WAS THE BLOOD OF STRANGERS...
...THE REMAINS OF A LITTLE GIRL...
...AND THE SHADOW OF A MAN...

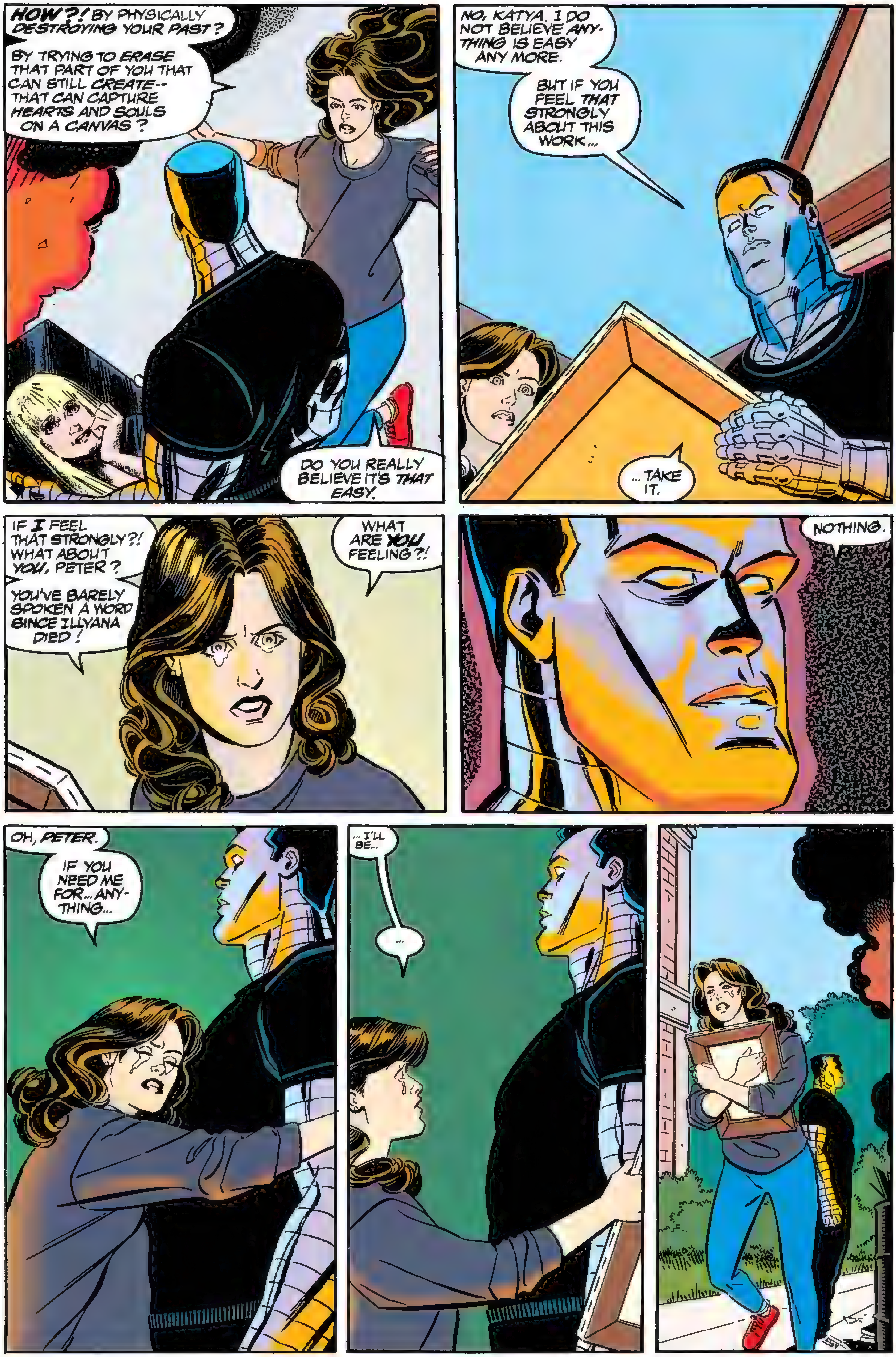


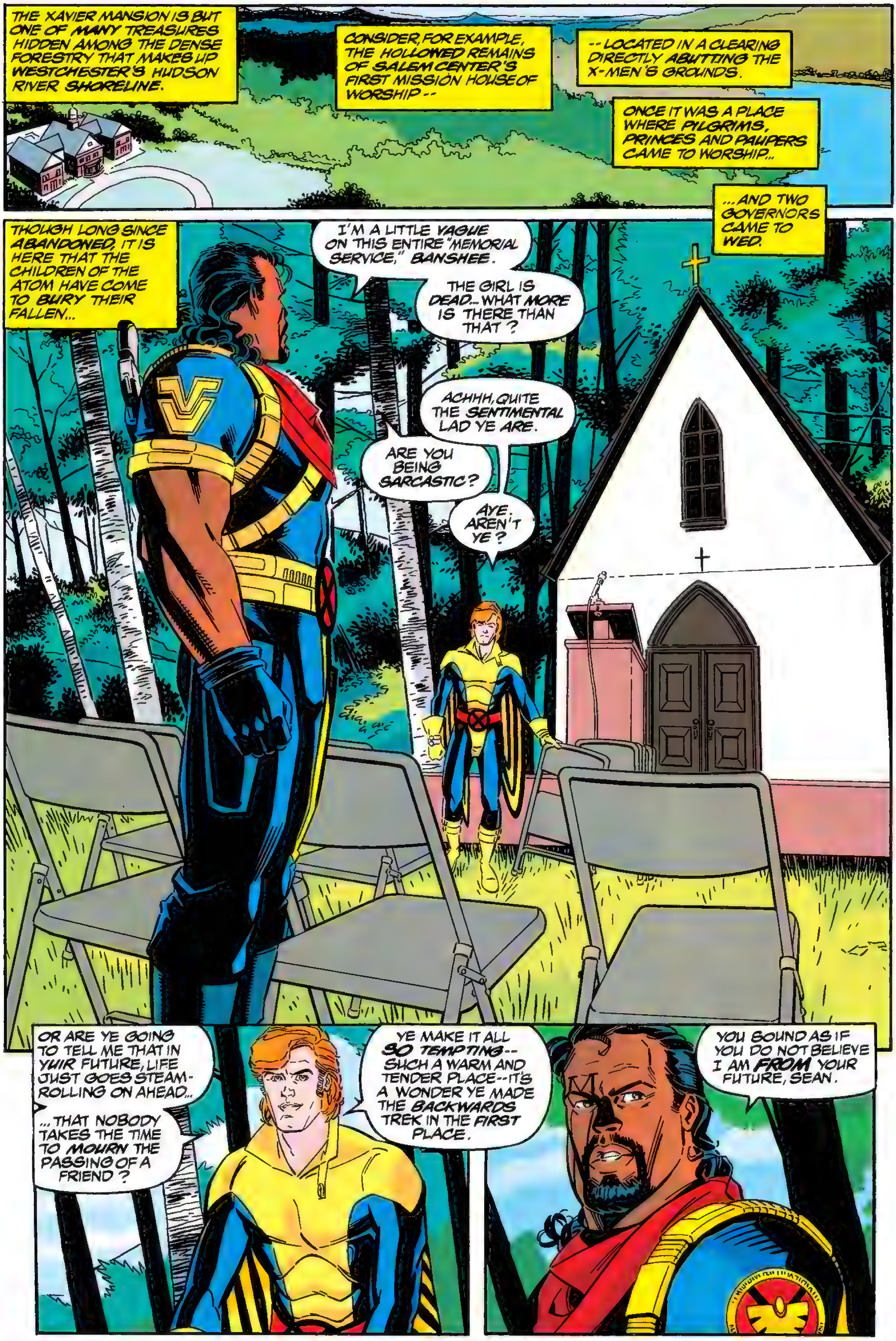
I DON'T WANT TO DO THIS, CHARLES--
-- RATHER, I HAVE TO.
I MUST BE STRONG, BECAUSE YOU AND YOUR X-MEN ARE TOO WEAK TO DO THAT WHICH MUST BE DONE!
FOR THIS REASON-- ABOVE ALL OTHERS-- HAVE I BEEN SPARED FROM THE SWEET SURRENDER THAT IS OBLIVION... THE COLD EMBRACE THAT IS DEATH... AGAIN AND TIME AGAIN.
FOR NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU AND ME, THE WELFARE OF THE CHILDREN IS PARAMOUNT.
WHETHER THEY BE THE INNOCENT, LIKE DOUG AND ANYA BEFORE THEM--
-- THE LOST, SUCH AS MY ACOLYTES...
...OR THE MISGUIDED, LIKE THE FOOLS YOU COUNT AMONG THE X-MEN...
... THEY NEED TO BE PROTECTED! THEY NEED TO BE AWAKENED FROM THE DREAM IN WHICH YOU'VE LULLED THEM!
WHETHER YOU ADMIT IT OR NOT, THEY NEED... MAGNETO!
THOUGH THE WORDS ECHO OFF THE EMPTY WALLS OF AVALON-- THE THOUGHTS THEY CONVEY, THE VERY EMOTIONS--CAN BE FELT AS FAR AWAY AS THE EARTH BELOW.
FOR WHILE NEITHER MAN WOULD ADMIT IT, PROFESSOR XAVIER AND MAGNETO ARE TWO SIDES TO THE SAME COIN...
... TWO MEN CONVINCED THEIR WAY IS MUTANT-KIND'S ONLY HOPE.

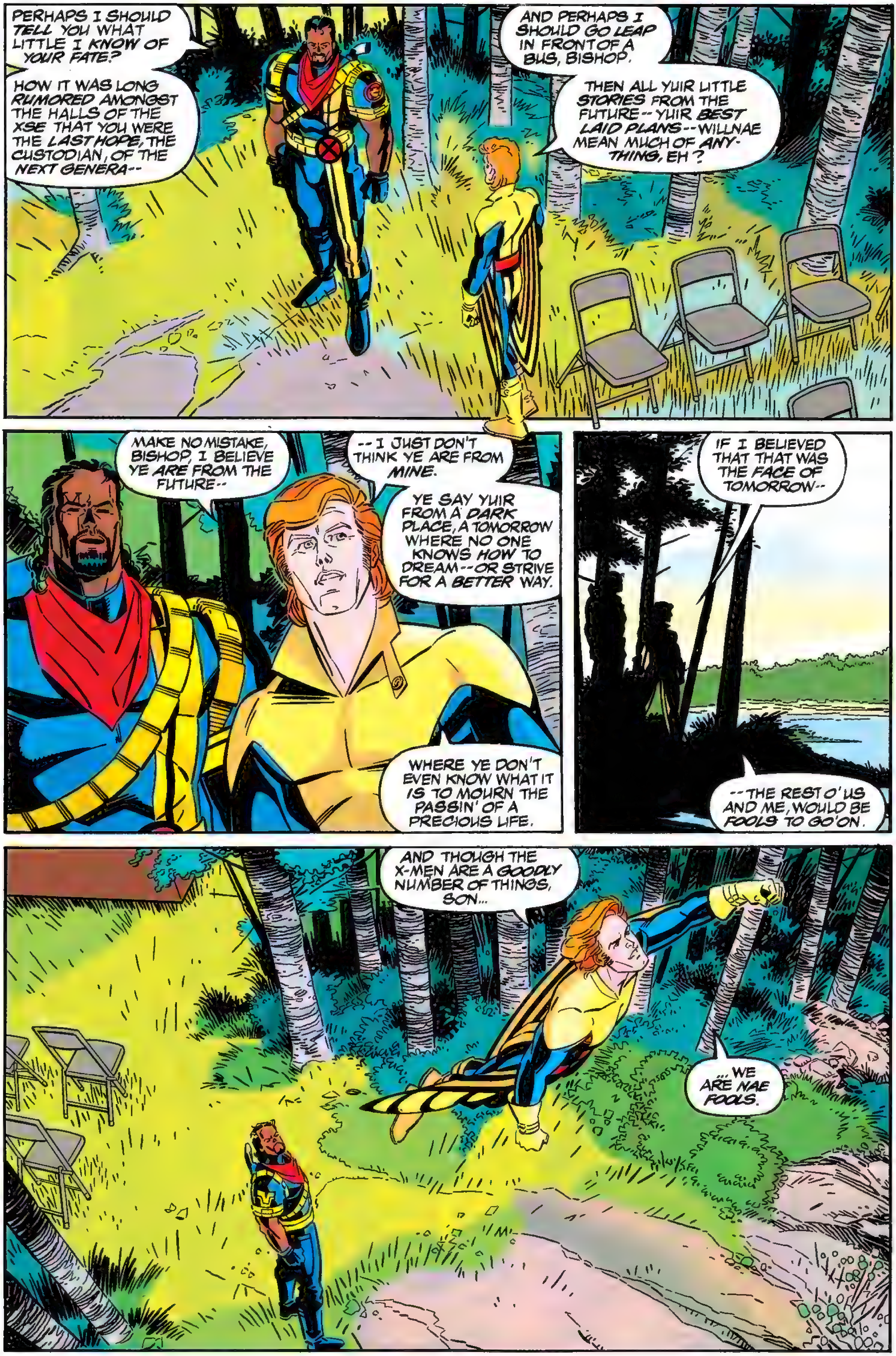

MEANWHILE...
SO... WHAT'S THE STORY, ORORO...?
DID THE PROFESSOR PUT EVERYONE ON A STRICT DIET?
NOT AT ALL, KITTEN.
WITH ALL THAT HAS HAPPENED IN RECENT DAYS, I AM AFRAID WE HAVE HAD LITTLE TIME TO ATTEND TO SHOPPING.
"SHOPPING"? HA!
WHAT AN UTTERLY NORMAL THING TO DO.
YOU USE THE WORD "NORMAL" AS IF IT WERE SOMETHING DESIRABLE. AN UNATTAINABLE GOAL YOU WISH TO ACHIEVE.
MAYBE.
JUST THINK IF WE LIVED NORMAL LIVES, I'D STILL BE IN DEARBORN, HOLDING MY PARENTS' MARRIAGE TOGETHER...
...YOU'D STILL BE IN KENYA...
...AND ILLYANA...?
...MY BEST FRIEND WOULD STILL BE ALIVE.
ADMIT IT, ORORO -- AREN'T THERE TIMES YOU WISH YOU WERE "NORMAL"?
HONESTLY...?
NO.
NOT FOR A MOMENT.
NOT ONCE.
WHILE THERE IS UNDENIABLY MUCH EACH OF US MUST SACRIFICE AS A RESULT OF OUR GENETIC BIRTHRIGHT...
FWOOSH

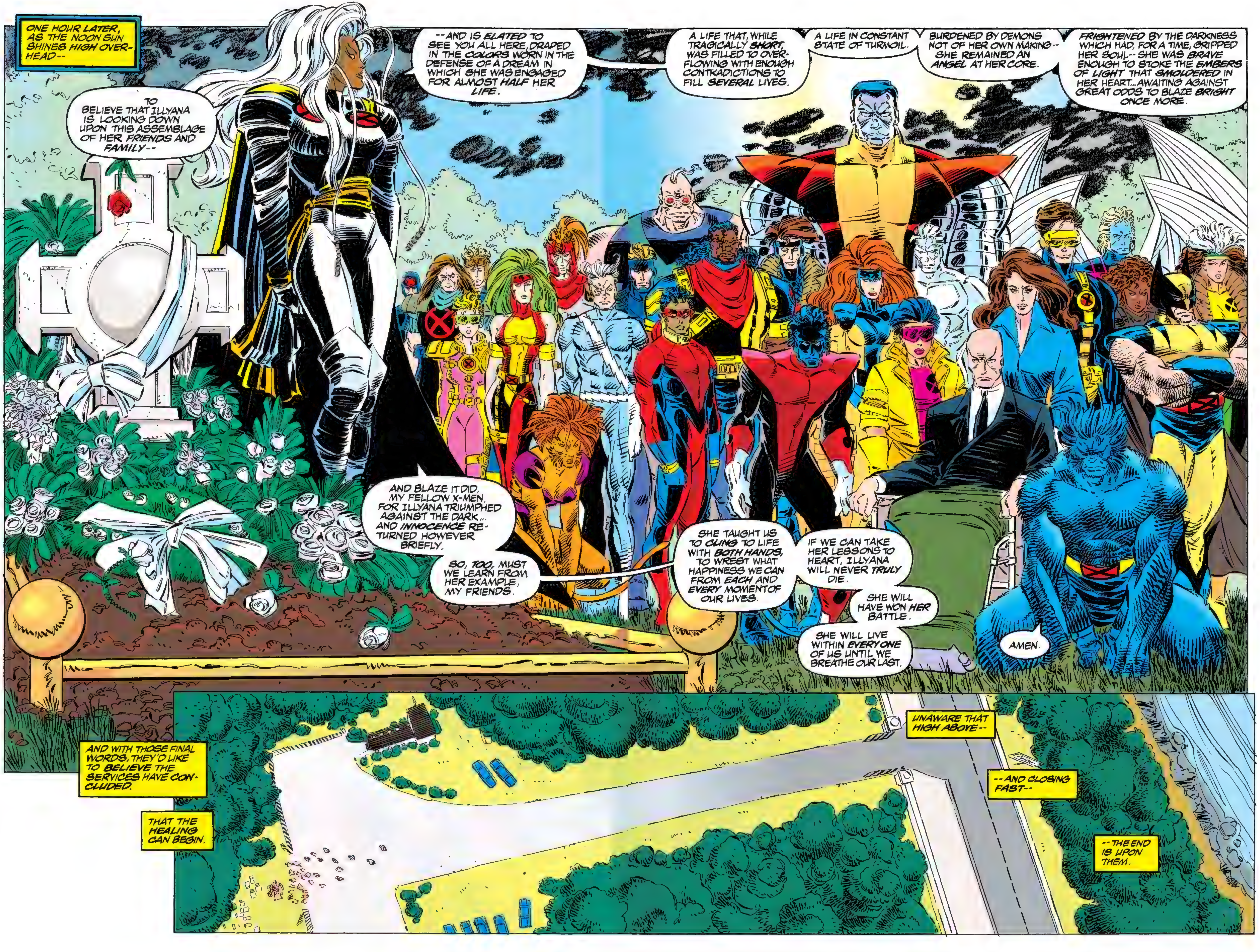

...THOSE SAME MUTANT POWERS EXPOSE US TO WONDERS UNTOLD -- OFTEN FORCING US TO LOOK AT LIFE IN ALL ITS MYRIAD DIVERSITY WITH OUR EYES WIDE OPEN...
...CHALLENGING US TO ENJOY EVERY DAY -- EVERY MOMENT OF OUR LIVES.
SUCH AS TAKING ADVANTAGE OF YOUR WEATHER MANIPULATING ABILITIES TO SNAG US SOME PERSONAL TIME ?
A GUILTY PLEASURE, I CONFESS.
WEIRD, ISN'T IT?
UP HERE, TOGETHER -- JUST YOU AND ME, AGAIN -- IT'S AS IF NOTHING'S CHANGED SINCE I LEFT THE X-MEN.
BUT IT HAS, KITTEN.
AND THEREIN LIES THE KEY TO OUR SURVIVAL. OUR VERY SANITY.
FOR NATURE HAS A WONDROUS WAY OF CHANGING EVERYTHING ABOUT US. MOTHER EARTH HERSELF IS IN A PERPETUAL STATE OF MOTION.
FOR EVERY ACTION WE TAKE, SUCH AS MY MANIPULATING THE WIND AND STORM --
-- THE BRIGHT LADY CAN BE TRUSTED TO ACT UPON IT, EXERTING HER OWN WILL ON OUR BEHALF. AND WE, IN THE END, MUST MARVEL AT HER WISDOM... AND HER GLORY.
A DRAMATIC RENDITION OF "EVERY CLOUD HAS A SILVER LINING..."?
TELL ME, ORORO... WHERE IS THE "GLORY" IN ILLYANA'S DEATH ? OR DOUG'S FOR THAT MATTER ?
OR JOHN PROUDSTAR'S ?
SOMETIMES A CLOUD IS JUST A CLOUD... AND WE SUFFER UNDER ITS SHADOW.


BUT THE SHADOW PASSES, KITTEN.
IT PASSES.
FOR A MOMENT, THERE ARE NO WORDS BETWEEN THEM...
...NO LOST YEARS.
FOR A MOMENT, THEY ARE AGAIN TWO FRIENDS BASKING IN THE SUNLIGHT--
--SEIZING THE DAY. FORGETTING THEIR MUTUAL SORROW.
THEN, REALITY INTRUDES...
...AGAIN.
WHA--?!
PETER-- NO!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
I WOULD THINK, KATYA, THE ANSWER IS OBVIOUS.
I AM GETTING ON WITH MY LIFE.
RATHER...
...WHAT PASSES FOR A "LIFE" WITHOUT MY SISTER... MY BROTHER... MY PARENTS.
Sketch


HOW?! BY PHYSICALLY DESTROYING YOUR PAST?
BY TRYING TO ERASE THAT PART OF YOU THAT CAN STILL CREATE-- THAT CAN CAPTURE HEARTS AND SOULS ON A CANVAS?
DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE IT'S THAT EASY.
NO, KATYA. I DO NOT BELIEVE ANYTHING IS EASY ANY MORE.
BUT IF YOU FEEL THAT STRONGLY ABOUT THIS WORK...
...TAKE IT.
IF I FEEL THAT STRONGLY?! WHAT ABOUT YOU, PETER?
YOU'VE BARELY SPOKEN A WORD SINCE ILLYANA DIED!
WHAT ARE YOU FEELING?!
NOTHING.
OH, PETER.
IF YOU NEED ME FOR... ANYTHING...
...I'LL BE...
...

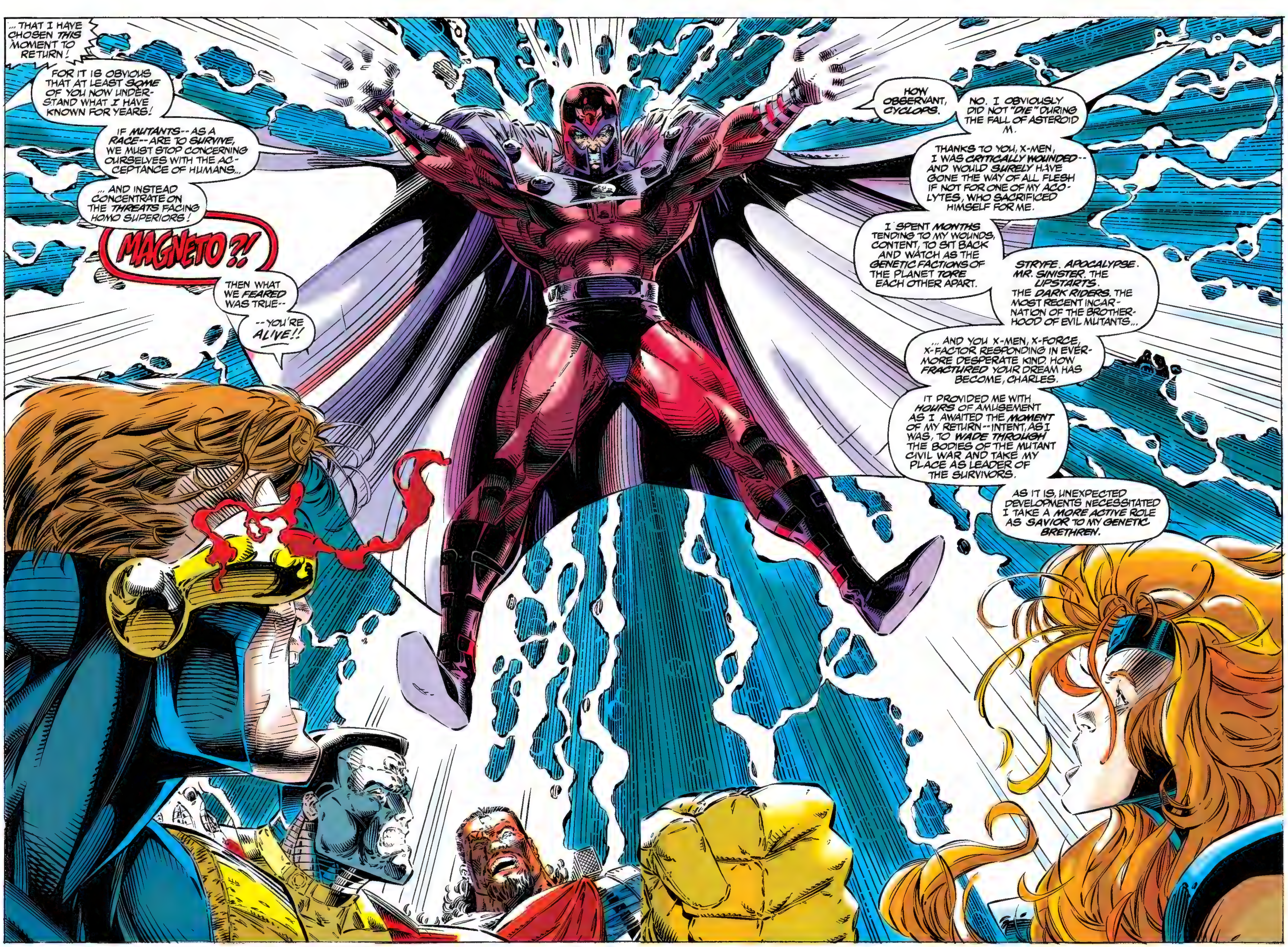

THE XAVIER MANSION IS BUT ONE OF MANY TREASURES HIDDEN AMONG THE DENSE FORESTRY THAT MAKES UP WESTCHESTER'S HUDSON RIVER SHORELINE.
CONSIDER, FOR EXAMPLE, THE HOLLOWED REMAINS OF SALEM CENTER'S FIRST MISSION HOUSE OF WORSHIP--
--LOCATED IN A CLEARING DIRECTLY ABUTTING THE X-MEN'S GROUNDS.
ONCE IT WAS A PLACE WHERE PILGRIMS, PRINCES AND PAUPERS CAME TO WORSHIP...
...AND TWO GOVERNORS CAME TO WED.
THOUGH LONG SINCE ABANDONED, IT IS HERE THAT THE CHILDREN OF THE ATOM HAVE COME TO BURY THEIR FALLEN...
I'M A LITTLE VAGUE ON THIS ENTIRE "MEMORIAL SERVICE," BANSHEE.
THE GIRL IS DEAD... WHAT MORE IS THERE THAN THAT?
ACHHH, QUITE THE SENTIMENTAL LAD YE ARE.
ARE YOU BEING SARCASTIC?
AYE. AREN'T YE?
OR ARE YE GOING TO TELL ME THAT IN YUIR FUTURE, LIFE JUST GOES STEAM-ROLLING ON AHEAD...
...THAT NOBODY TAKES THE TIME TO MOURN THE PASSING OF A FRIEND?
YE MAKE IT ALL SO TEMPTING-- SUCH A WARM AND TENDER PLACE--IT'S A WONDER YE MADE THE BACKWARDS TREK IN THE FIRST PLACE.
YOU SOUND AS IF YOU DO NOT BELIEVE I AM FROM YOUR FUTURE, SEAN.


PERHAPS I SHOULD *TELL* YOU WHAT LITTLE I *KNOW* OF *YOUR FATE?*
HOW IT WAS LONG *RUMORED* AMONGST THE HALLS OF THE *XSE* THAT YOU WERE THE *LAST HOPE*, THE CUSTODIAN, OF THE *NEXT GENERA--*
AND PERHAPS I SHOULD *GO LEAP* IN FRONT OF A BUS, BISHOP.
THEN ALL YUIR LITTLE *STORIES* FROM THE FUTURE--YUIR *BEST LAID PLANS*--WILLNAE MEAN MUCH OF *ANYTHING*, EH?
MAKE NO MISTAKE, BISHOP, I BELIEVE YE *ARE* FROM THE FUTURE--
--I JUST DON'T THINK YE ARE FROM *MINE*.
YE SAY YUIR FROM A *DARK PLACE*, A TOMORROW WHERE NO ONE KNOWS *HOW* TO DREAM--OR STRIVE FOR A *BETTER* WAY.
WHERE YE DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT IT *IS* TO MOURN THE PASSIN' OF A PRECIOUS LIFE.
IF I BELIEVED THAT THAT WAS THE *FACE OF* TOMORROW--
--THE REST O' US AND ME, WOULD BE *FOOLS* TO GO ON.
AND THOUGH THE X-MEN ARE A *GOODLY* NUMBER OF THINGS, SON...
...WE ARE *NAE FOOLS*.

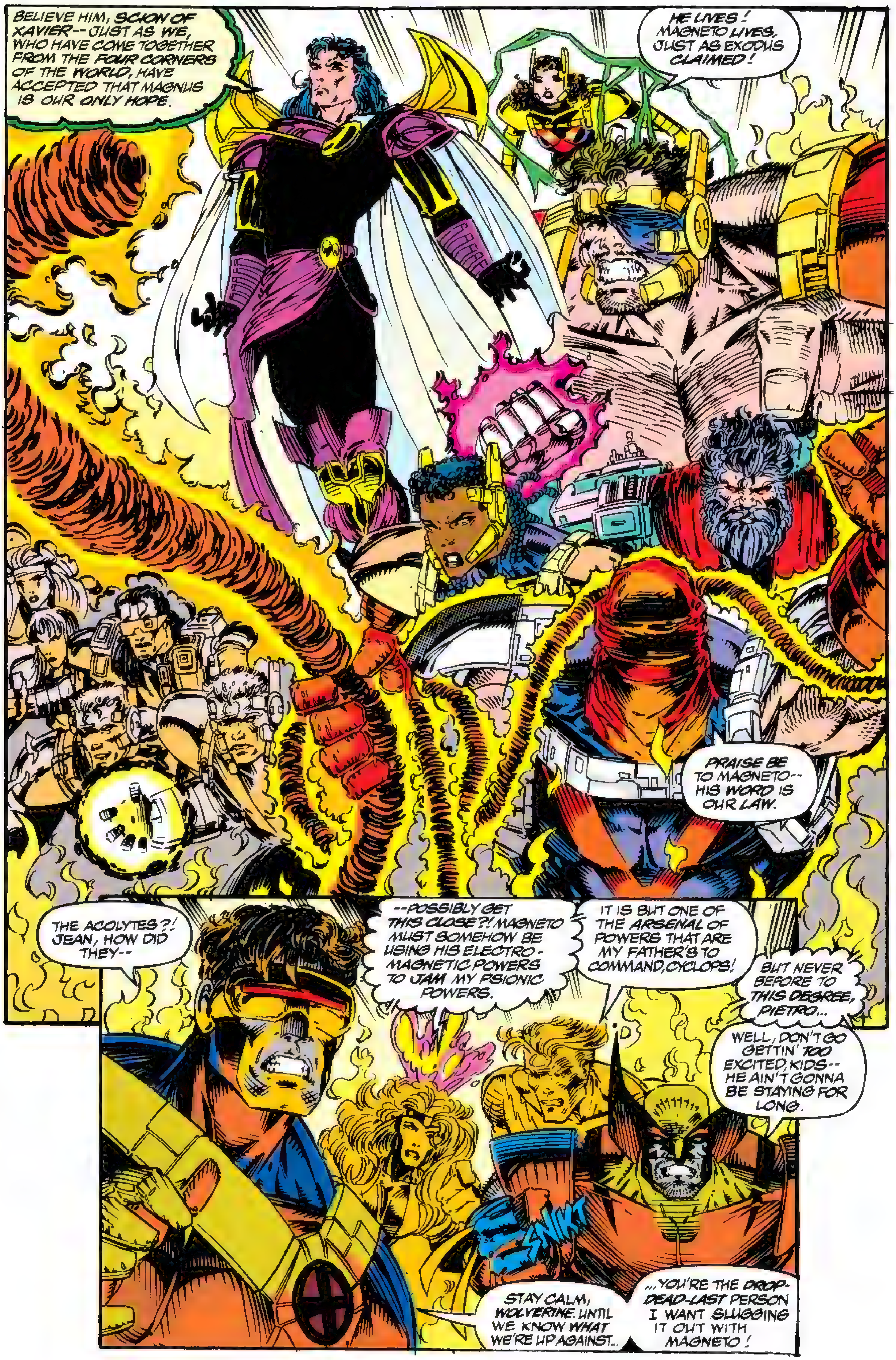

ONE HOUR LATER, AS THE NOON SUN SHINES HIGH OVERHEAD--
TO BELIEVE THAT ILLYANA IS LOOKING DOWN UPON THIS ASSEMBLAGE OF HER FRIENDS AND FAMILY--
--AND IS ELATED TO SEE YOU ALL HERE, DRAPED IN THE COLORS WORN IN THE DEFENSE OF A DREAM IN WHICH SHE WAS ENGAGED FOR ALMOST HALF HER LIFE.
A LIFE THAT, WHILE TRAGICALLY SHORT, WAS FILLED TO OVERFLOWING WITH ENOUGH CONTRADICTIONS TO FILL SEVERAL LIVES.
A LIFE IN CONSTANT STATE OF TURMOIL.
BURDENED BY DEMONS NOT OF HER OWN MAKING-- SHE REMAINED AN ANGEL AT HER CORE.
FRIGHTENED BY THE DARKNESS WHICH HAD, FOR A TIME, GRIPPED HER SOUL-- SHE WAS BRAVE ENOUGH TO STOKE THE EMBERS OF LIGHT THAT SMOLDERED IN HER HEART... AWAITING AGAINST GREAT ODDS TO BLAZE BRIGHT ONCE MORE.
AND BLAZE IT DID, MY FELLOW X-MEN. FOR ILLYANA TRIUMPHED AGAINST THE DARK... AND INNOCENCE RETURNED HOWEVER BRIEFLY.
SO, TOO, MUST WE LEARN FROM HER EXAMPLE, MY FRIENDS.
SHE TAUGHT US TO CLING TO LIFE WITH BOTH HANDS, TO WREST WHAT HAPPINESS WE CAN FROM EACH AND EVERY MOMENT OF OUR LIVES.
IF WE CAN TAKE HER LESSONS TO HEART, ILLYANA WILL NEVER TRULY DIE.
SHE WILL HAVE WON HER BATTLE.
SHE WILL LIVE WITHIN EVERYONE OF US UNTIL WE BREATHE OUR LAST.
AMEN.
AND WITH THOSE FINAL WORDS, THEY'D LIKE TO BELIEVE THE SERVICES HAVE CONCLUDED.
THAT THE HEALING CAN BEGIN.
UNAWARE THAT HIGH ABOVE--
--AND CLOSING FAST--
--THE END IS UPON THEM.

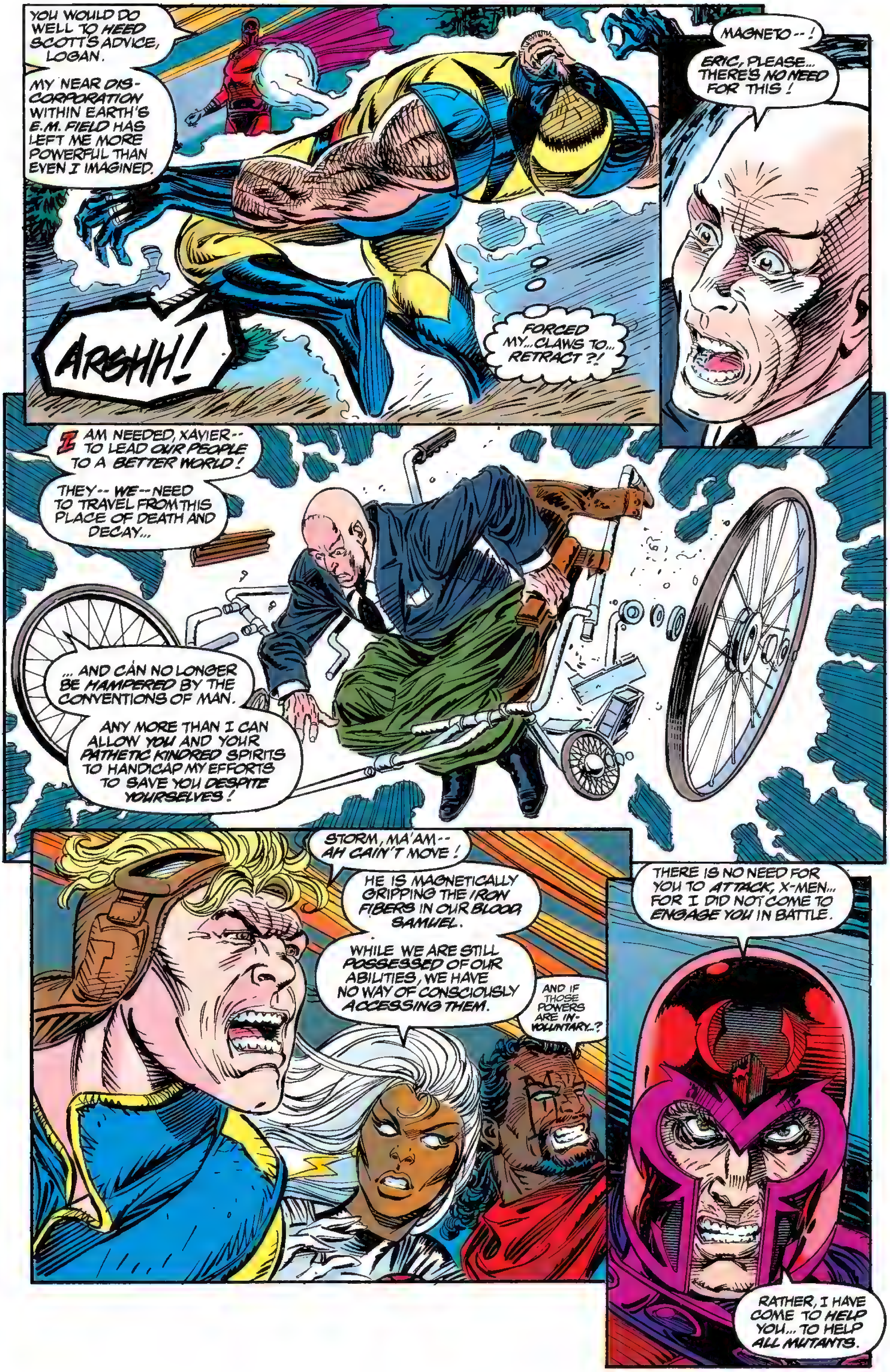
OH, SAM...
AH KNOW, KITTY.
WE'VE BEEN THROUGH THIS BEFORE--BUT IT DON'T GET ANY EASIER, DOES IT?
I DO NOT UNDERSTAND WHY WE INDULGE IN THIS *MASOCHISTIC* "MOURNING PROCESS"--WHEN WE SHOULD BE ADDRESSING THE *RECENT ASSAULT* ON CABLE.*
DON'T LOOK AT *ME*, SHATTERSTAR...
MAYBE SAMMY DOESN'T THINK IT'S ANY OF THE X-MEN'S BUSINESS.
*SEE X-FORCE #25.--BOB
OR MAYBE HE'S BEEN DISTRACTED, *FERAL*.
LOSING A FRIEND CAN *DO* THAT TO YOU. NOW, TELL ME...
...*WHO--EXACTLY--* WAS *RESPONSIBLE* FOR THIS ATTACK ON X-FORCE'S LEADER?
AND *WHY* DO I GET THE FEELING I'M NOT GOING TO LIKE THE ANSWER?
PETER?
A MOMENT, SON.
I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW HOW TERRIBLY *SORRY* I AM.
ARE YOU,... SIR?
WHY DO I *DOUBT* THAT?

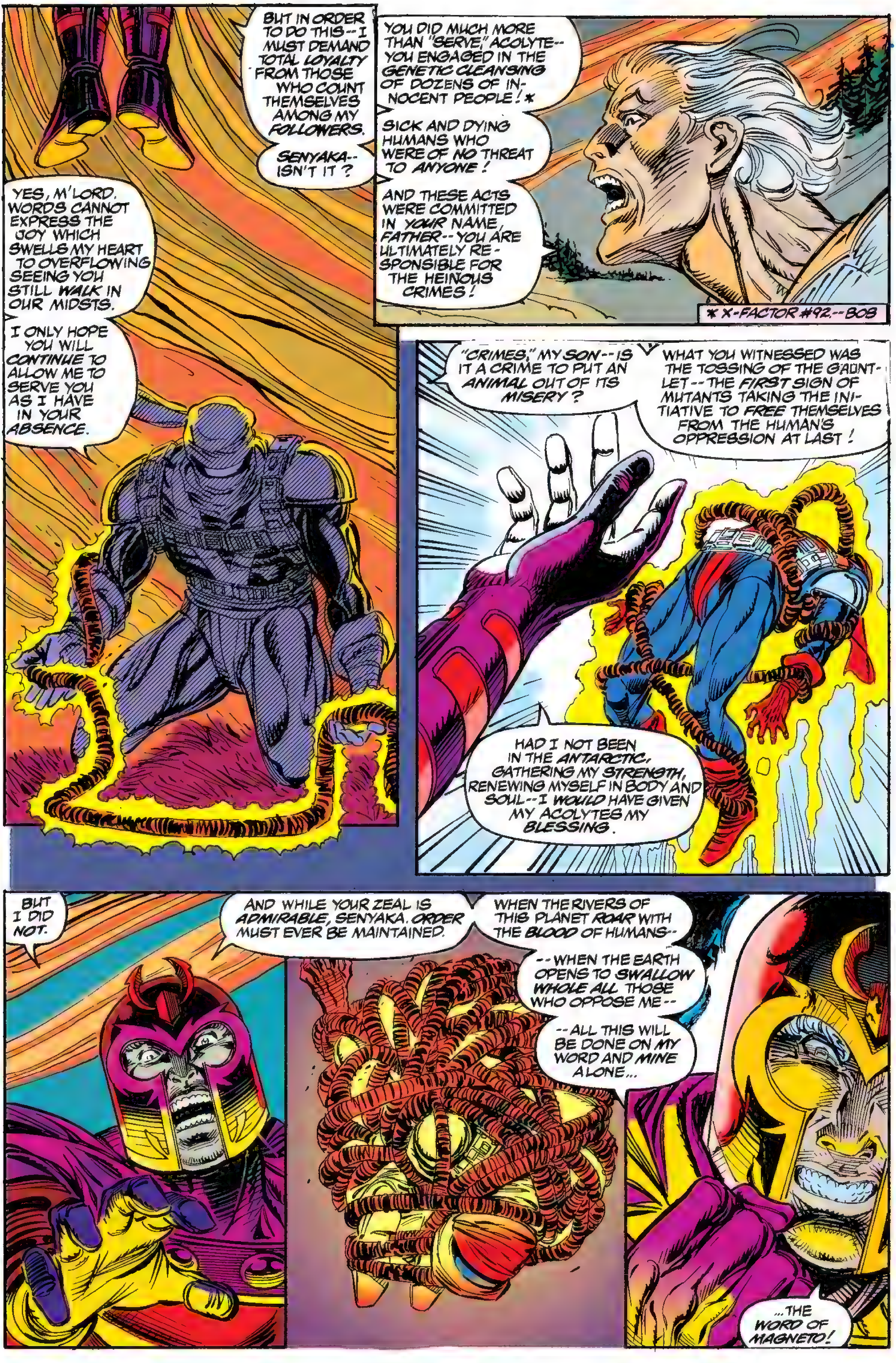
IS IT BECAUSE I HAVE TROUBLE BELIEVING *ANYTHING* YOU SAY?
WHEN YOU ASKED ME TO LEAVE THE UST-ORDYNSKI COLLECTIVE-- *
--YOU SAID--AND I REMEMBER THE WORDS AS IF YOU SAID THEM ONLY YESTERDAY--"POWER SUCH AS *YOURS* BELONGS TO THE *WORLD,* PETER--TO BE USED FOR THE *GOOD OF ALL*."
ORORO...
...I THINK SOMETHING'S BREWING.
* GIANT-SIZE X-MEN #1.--BOB
ON NOTHING *MORE* THAN YOUR WORD, I LEFT MY FAMILY--MY *LIFE*--AND *DIDN'T LOOK BACK.* I *THRILLED* TO THOSE WORDS, PROFESSOR. THEY MADE ME *PART OF A* LARGER *WHOLE.*
NEVER *ONCE* DID I *FALTER*--DID I *QUESTION*--THE *VALIDITY*--THE *COST*--OF *YOUR DREAM!*
NO, GODSPOTIN XAVIER--I DID NOT *FAIL YOU.*
YOU--YOU AND YOUR *DREAM*--*FAILED* ME!
WORSE, IT FAILED ILLYANA.
AND FOR THAT--I WILL *NEVER* FORGIVE YOU.
PETER! HOLD ON. YOU'RE--
--*ABSOLUTELY* RIGHT, SON.
HOW *FORTUITOUS* FOR EVERYONE...


... THAT I HAVE CHOSEN THIS MOMENT TO RETURN!
FOR IT IS OBVIOUS THAT AT LEAST SOME OF YOU NOW UNDERSTAND WHAT I HAVE KNOWN FOR YEARS!
IF MUTANTS-- AS A RACE-- ARE TO SURVIVE, WE MUST STOP CONCERNING OURSELVES WITH THE ACCEPTANCE OF HUMANS...
... AND INSTEAD CONCENTRATE ON THE THREATS FACING HOMO SUPERIORS!
MAGNETO?!
THEN WHAT WE FEARED WAS TRUE--
--YOU'RE ALIVE!!
HOW OBSERVANT, CYCLOPS.
NO. I OBVIOUSLY DID NOT "DIE" DURING THE FALL OF ASTEROID M.
THANKS TO YOU, X-MEN, I WAS CRITICALLY WOUNDED-- AND WOULD SURELY HAVE GONE THE WAY OF ALL FLESH IF NOT FOR ONE OF MY ACOLYTES, WHO SACRIFICED HIMSELF FOR ME.
I SPENT MONTHS TENDING TO MY WOUNDS, CONTENT, TO SIT BACK AND WATCH AS THE GENETIC FACTIONS OF THE PLANET TORE EACH OTHER APART.
STRYFE. APOCALYPSE. MR. SINISTER. THE UPSTARTS. THE DARK RIDERS. THE MOST RECENT INCARNATION OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS...
... AND YOU X-MEN, X-FORCE, X-FACTOR RESPONDING IN EVERMORE DESPERATE KIND. HOW FRACTURED YOUR DREAM HAS BECOME, CHARLES.
IT PROVIDED ME WITH HOURS OF AMUSEMENT AS I AWAITED THE MOMENT OF MY RETURN-- INTENT, AS I WAS, TO WADE THROUGH THE BODIES OF THE MUTANT CIVIL WAR AND TAKE MY PLACE AS LEADER OF THE SURVIVORS.
AS IT IS, UNEXPECTED DEVELOPMENTS NECESSITATED I TAKE A MORE ACTIVE ROLE AS SAVIOR TO MY GENETIC BRETHREN.

CRASHING A FUNERAL MAGSTER?
TRES TRACKY.
ROBERT IS RIGHT-- HAVE YOU BECOME SO INTIMATE WITH THE CONCEPT OF DEATH THAT YOU NO LONGER RESPECT THE PASSING OF OTHERS?
ON THE CONTRARY, STORM.
I AM HERE BECAUSE OF MY RESPECT FOR THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE ME-- AND TO PREVENT OTHERS FROM SHARING THEIR FATE.
I AM HERE TO OFFER EACH OF YOU SANCTUARY FROM THE COMING FIRE-STORM OF DEATH THAT WILL SOON RAGE ACROSS THIS PLANET.
I'VE RETURNED TO OFFER YOU AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE GENOCIDE OF OUR PEOPLE.
I'M HERE TO OFFER YOU...
...SALVATION.


BELIEVE HIM, SCION OF XAVIER-- JUST AS WE, WHO HAVE COME TOGETHER FROM THE FOUR CORNERS OF THE WORLD, HAVE ACCEPTED THAT MAGNUS IS OUR ONLY HOPE.
HE LIVES! MAGNETO LIVES, JUST AS EXODUS CLAIMED!
PRAISE BE TO MAGNETO-- HIS WORD IS OUR LAW.
THE ACOLYTES?! JEAN, HOW DID THEY--
--POSSIBLY GET THIS CLOSE?! MAGNETO MUST SOMEHOW BE USING HIS ELECTRO-MAGNETIC POWERS TO JAM MY PSIONIC POWERS.
IT IS BUT ONE OF THE ARSENAL OF POWERS THAT ARE MY FATHER'S TO COMMAND, CYCLOPS!
BUT NEVER BEFORE TO THIS DEGREE, PIETRO...
WELL, DON'T GO GETTIN' TOO EXCITED, KIDS-- HE AIN'T GONNA BE STAYING FOR LONG.
SNIKT
STAY CALM, WOLVERINE. UNTIL WE KNOW WHAT WE'RE UP AGAINST...
...YOU'RE THE DROP-DEAD-LAST PERSON I WANT SLUGGING IT OUT WITH MAGNETO!


YOU WOULD DO WELL TO HEED SCOTT'S ADVICE, LOGAN.
MY NEAR DIS-CORPORATION WITHIN EARTH'S E.M. FIELD HAS LEFT ME MORE POWERFUL THAN EVEN I IMAGINED.
ARGHH!
FORCED MY... CLAWS TO... RETRACT ?!
MAGNETO -- !
ERIC, PLEASE... THERE'S NO NEED FOR THIS !
I AM NEEDED, XAVIER -- TO LEAD OUR PEOPLE TO A BETTER WORLD !
THEY -- WE -- NEED TO TRAVEL FROM THIS PLACE OF DEATH AND DECAY...
... AND CAN NO LONGER BE HAMPERED BY THE CONVENTIONS OF MAN.
ANY MORE THAN I CAN ALLOW YOU AND YOUR PATHETIC KINDRED SPIRITS TO HANDICAP MY EFFORTS TO SAVE YOU DESPITE YOURSELVES !
STORM, MA'AM -- AH CAIN'T MOVE !
HE IS MAGNETICALLY GRIPPING THE IRON FIBERS IN OUR BLOOD, SAMUEL.
WHILE WE ARE STILL POSSESSED OF OUR ABILITIES, WE HAVE NO WAY OF CONSCIOUSLY ACCESSING THEM.
AND IF THOSE POWERS ARE IN-VOLUNTARY...?
THERE IS NO NEED FOR YOU TO ATTACK, X-MEN... FOR I DID NOT COME TO ENGAGE YOU IN BATTLE.
RATHER, I HAVE COME TO HELP YOU... TO HELP ALL MUTANTS.


BUT IN ORDER TO DO THIS--I MUST DEMAND TOTAL LOYALTY FROM THOSE WHO COUNT THEMSELVES AMONG MY FOLLOWERS.
SENYAKA-- ISN'T IT ?
YES, M'LORD. WORDS CANNOT EXPRESS THE JOY WHICH SWELLS MY HEART TO OVERFLOWING SEEING YOU STILL WALK IN OUR MIDSTS.
I ONLY HOPE YOU WILL CONTINUE TO ALLOW ME TO SERVE YOU AS I HAVE IN YOUR ABSENCE.
YOU DID MUCH MORE THAN "SERVE," ACOLYTE-- YOU ENGAGED IN THE GENETIC CLEANSING OF DOZENS OF INNOCENT PEOPLE ! *
SICK AND DYING HUMANS WHO WERE OF NO THREAT TO ANYONE !
AND THESE ACTS WERE COMMITTED IN YOUR NAME, FATHER--YOU ARE ULTIMATELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE HEINOUS CRIMES !
* X-FACTOR #92.--BOB
"CRIMES," MY SON--IS IT A CRIME TO PUT AN ANIMAL OUT OF ITS MISERY ?
WHAT YOU WITNESSED WAS THE TOSSING OF THE GAUNTLET--THE FIRST SIGN OF MUTANTS TAKING THE INITIATIVE TO FREE THEMSELVES FROM THE HUMAN'S OPPRESSION AT LAST !
HAD I NOT BEEN IN THE ANTARCTIC, GATHERING MY STRENGTH, RENEWING MYSELF IN BODY AND SOUL--I WOULD HAVE GIVEN MY ACOLYTES MY BLESSING.
BUT I DID NOT.
AND WHILE YOUR ZEAL IS ADMIRABLE, SENYAKA. ORDER MUST EVER BE MAINTAINED.
WHEN THE RIVERS OF THIS PLANET ROAR WITH THE BLOOD OF HUMANS--
--WHEN THE EARTH OPENS TO SWALLOW WHOLE ALL THOSE WHO OPPOSE ME--
--ALL THIS WILL BE DONE ON MY WORD AND MINE ALONE...
...THE WORD OF MAGNETO!

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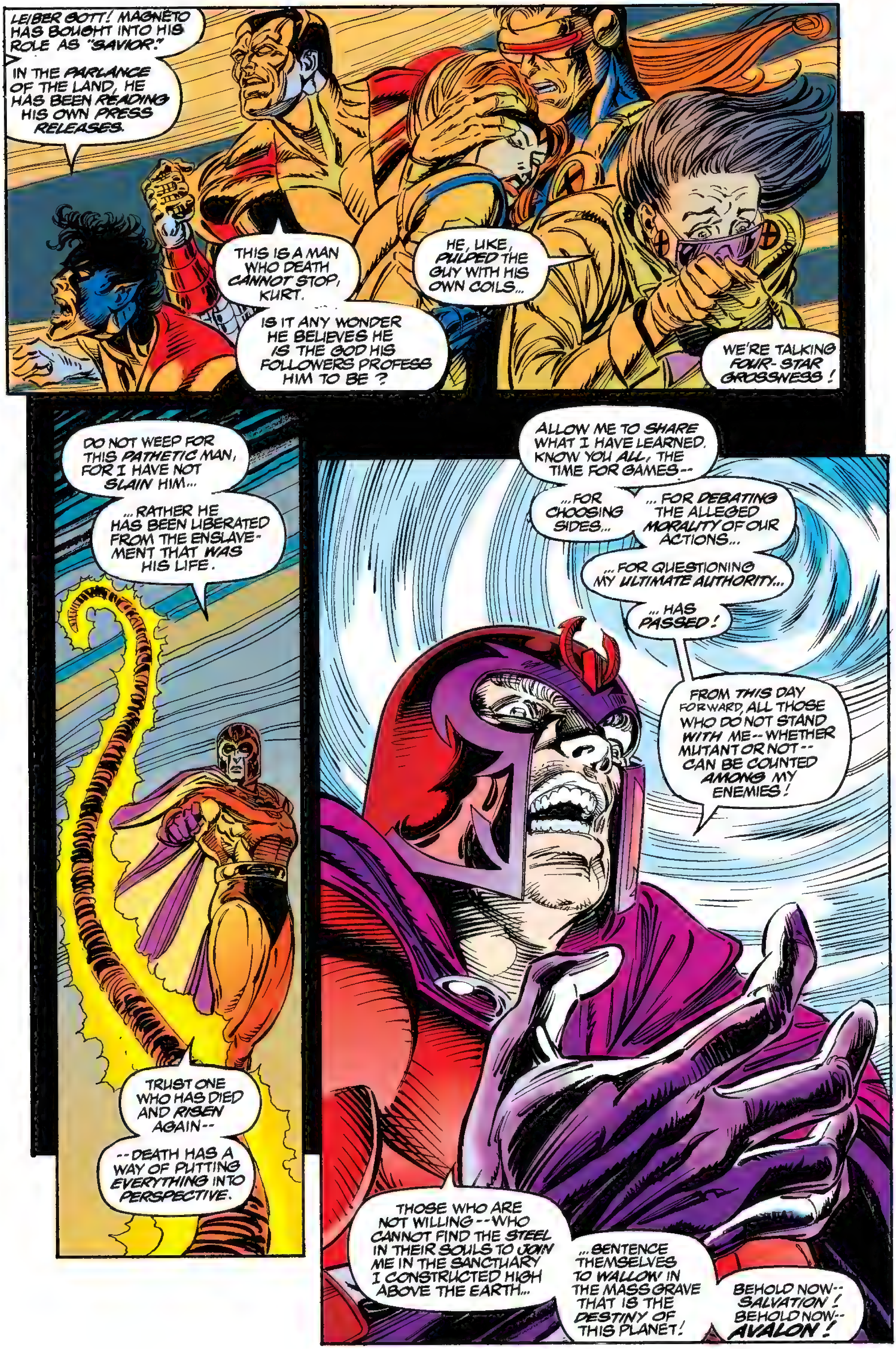
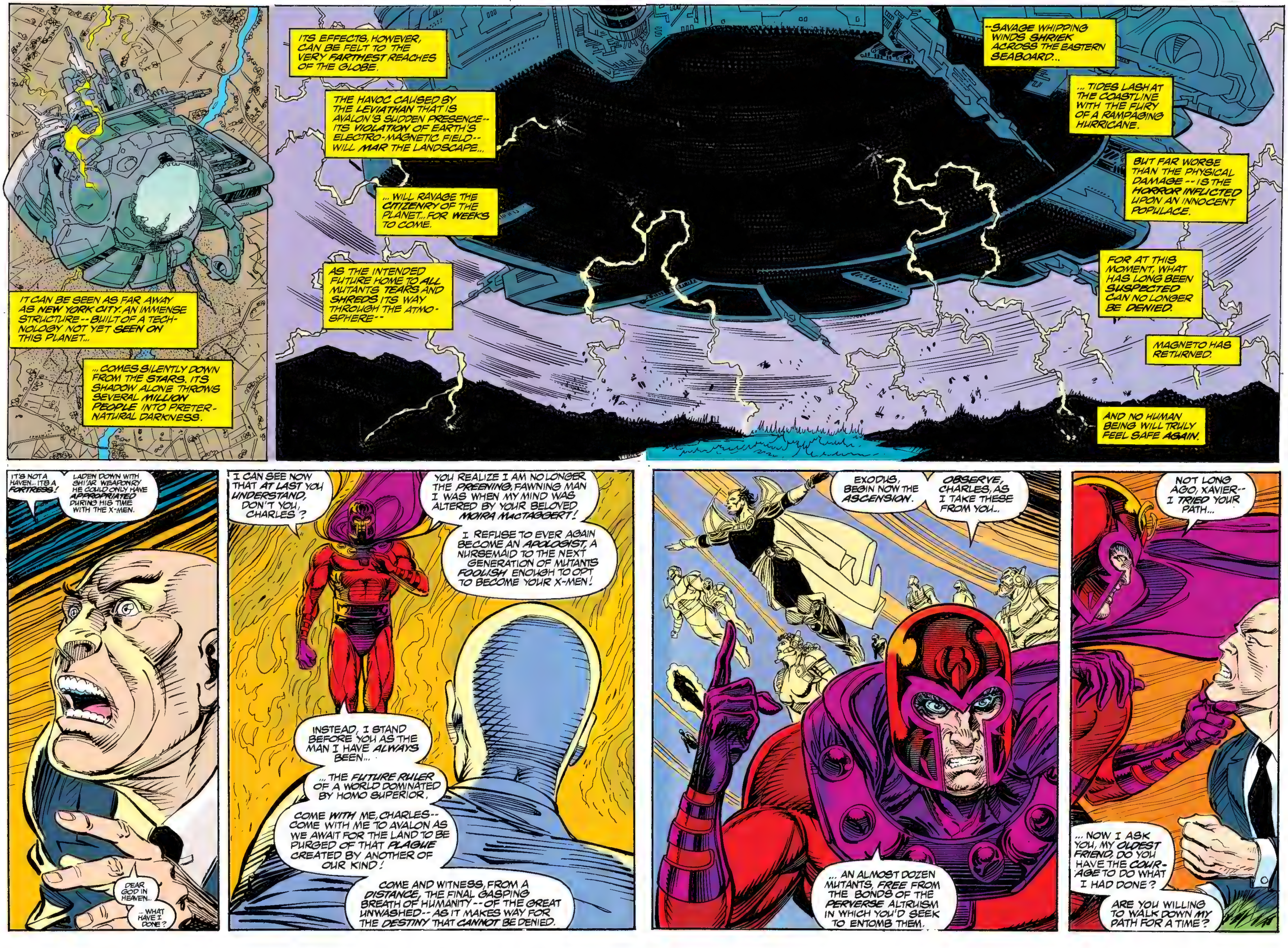
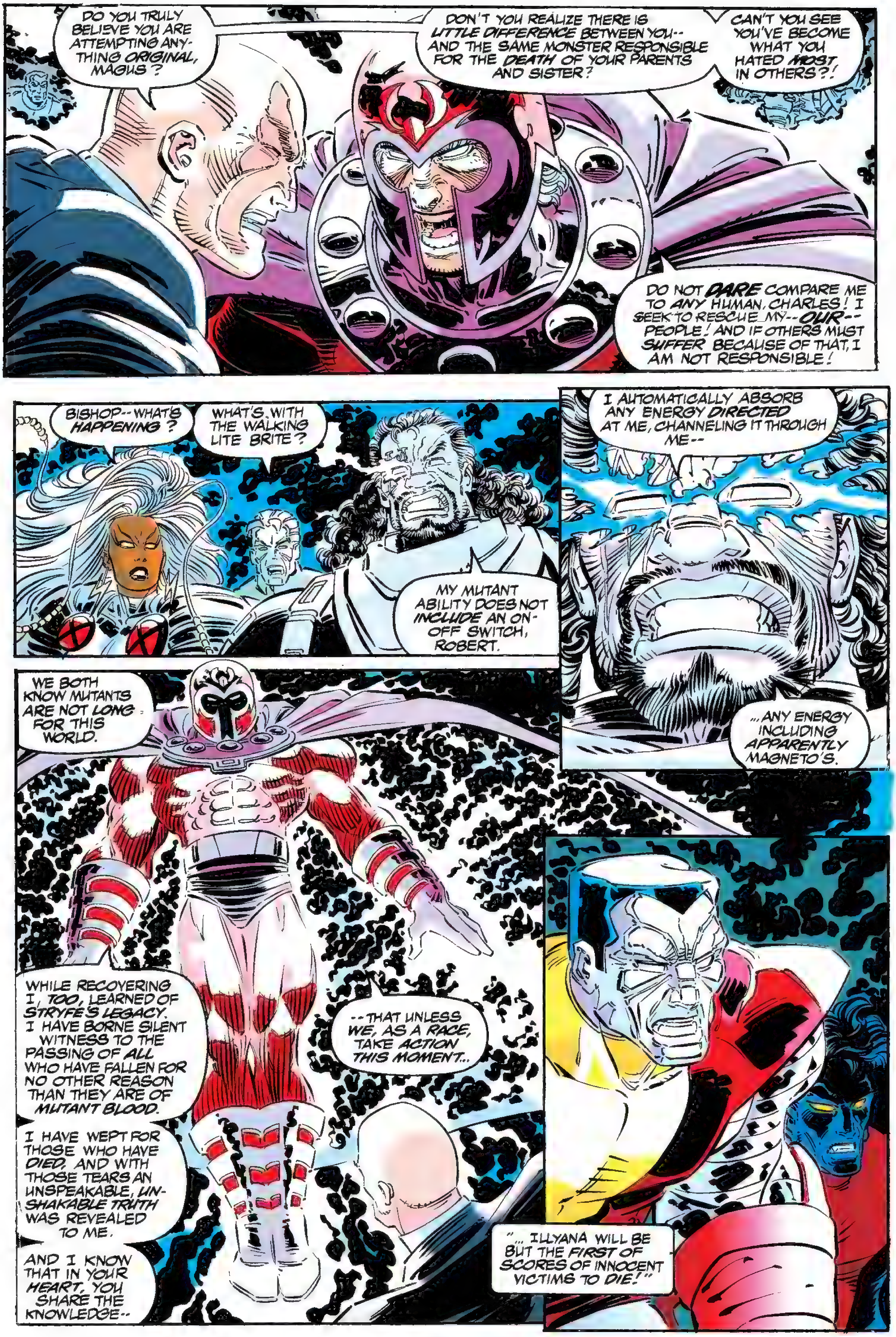
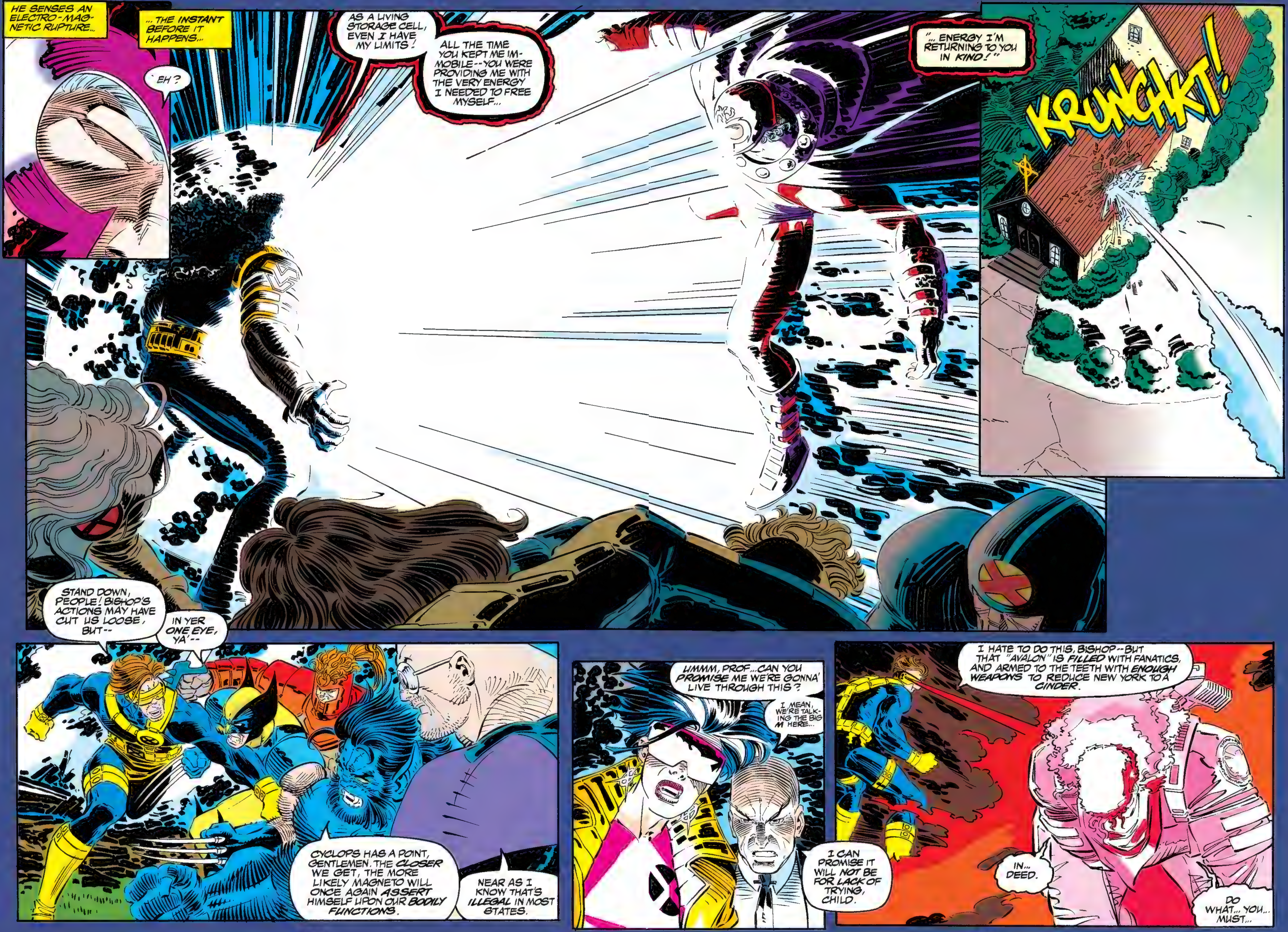
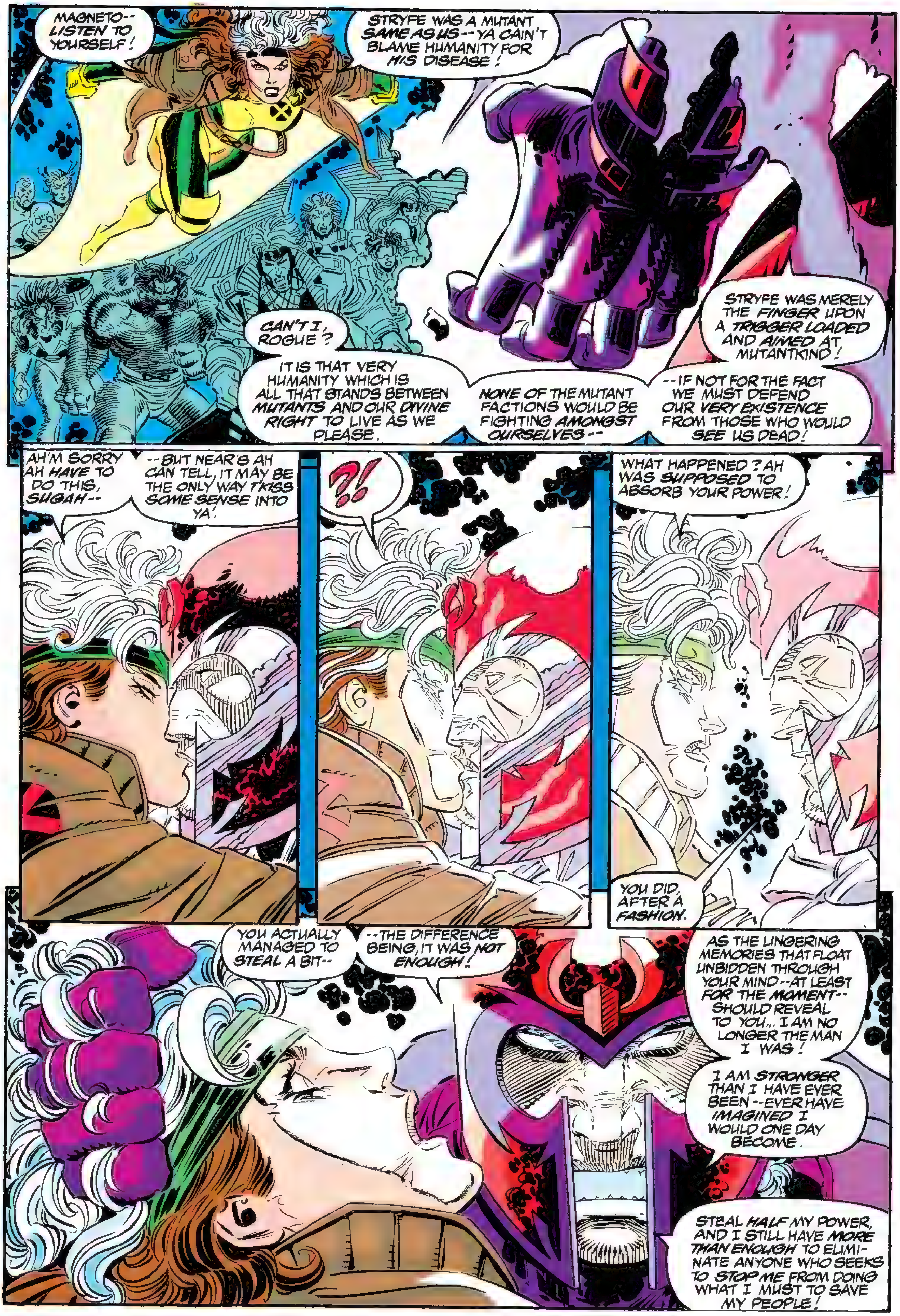

LEIBER GOTT! MAGNETO HAS BOUGHT INTO HIS ROLE AS "SAVIOR."
IN THE PARLANCE OF THE LAND, HE HAS BEEN READING HIS OWN PRESS RELEASES.
THIS IS A MAN WHO DEATH CANNOT STOP, KURT.
IS IT ANY WONDER HE BELIEVES HE IS THE GOD HIS FOLLOWERS PROFESS HIM TO BE?
HE, LIKE, PULPED THE GUY WITH HIS OWN COILS...
WE'RE TALKING FOUR-STAR GROSSNESS!
DO NOT WEEP FOR THIS PATHETIC MAN, FOR I HAVE NOT SLAIN HIM...
...RATHER HE HAS BEEN LIBERATED FROM THE ENSLAVEMENT THAT WAS HIS LIFE.
TRUST ONE WHO HAS DIED AND RISEN AGAIN--
--DEATH HAS A WAY OF PUTTING EVERYTHING INTO PERSPECTIVE.
ALLOW ME TO SHARE WHAT I HAVE LEARNED. KNOW YOU ALL, THE TIME FOR GAMES--
...FOR CHOOSING SIDES...
...FOR DEBATING THE ALLEGED MORALITY OF OUR ACTIONS...
...FOR QUESTIONING MY ULTIMATE AUTHORITY...
...HAS PASSED!
FROM THIS DAY FORWARD, ALL THOSE WHO DO NOT STAND WITH ME--WHETHER MUTANT OR NOT--CAN BE COUNTED AMONG MY ENEMIES!
THOSE WHO ARE NOT WILLING--WHO CANNOT FIND THE STEEL IN THEIR SOULS TO JOIN ME IN THE SANCTUARY I CONSTRUCTED HIGH ABOVE THE EARTH...
...SENTENCE THEMSELVES TO WALLOW IN THE MASS GRAVE THAT IS THE DESTINY OF THIS PLANET!
BEHOLD NOW--SALVATION! BEHOLD NOW--AVALON!

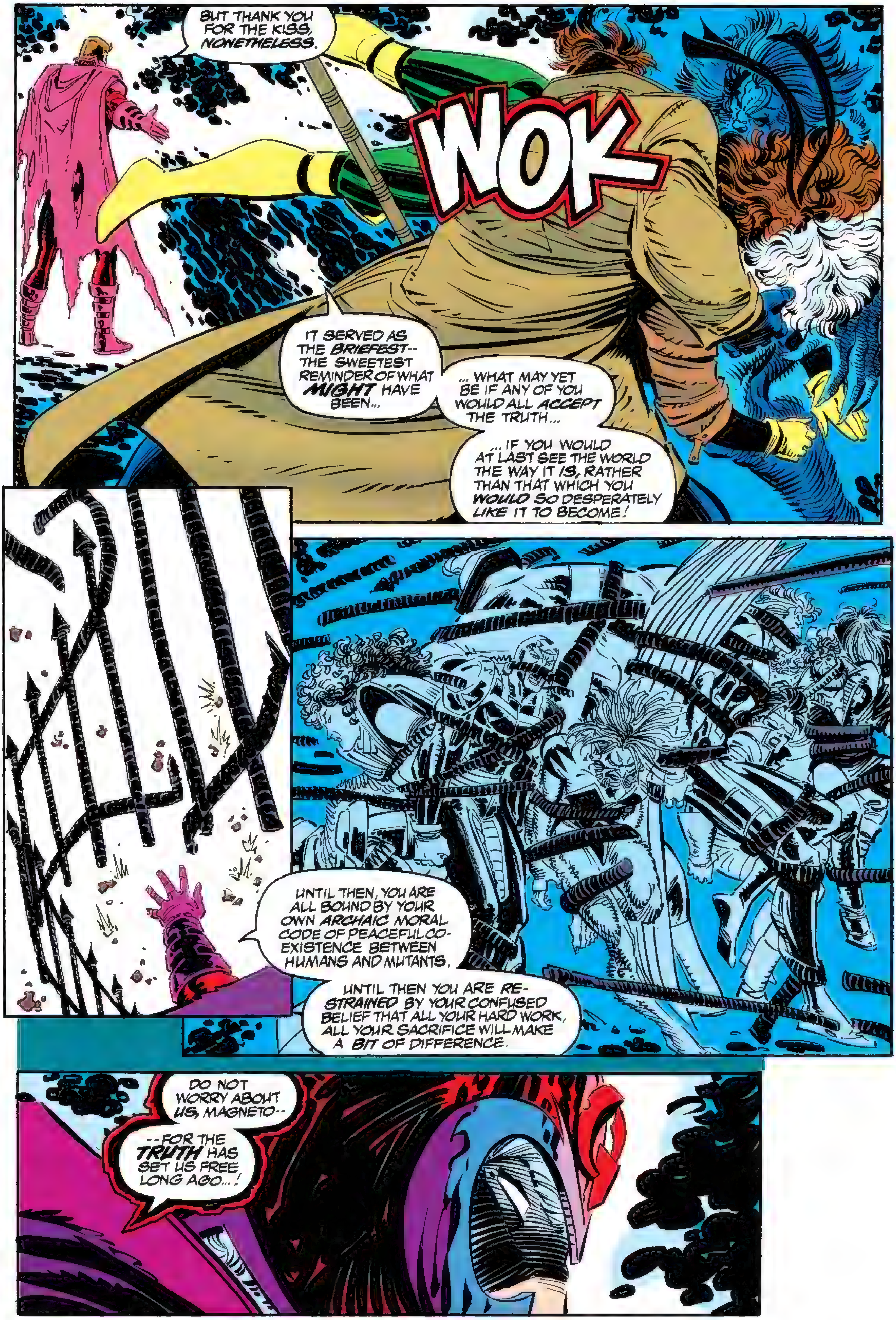

IT CAN BE SEEN AS FAR AWAY AS NEW YORK CITY. AN IMMENSE STRUCTURE -- BUILT OF A TECHNOLOGY NOT YET SEEN ON THIS PLANET...
...COMES SILENTLY DOWN FROM THE STARS. ITS SHADOW ALONE THROWS SEVERAL MILLION PEOPLE INTO PRETERNATURAL DARKNESS.
ITS EFFECTS, HOWEVER, CAN BE FELT TO THE VERY FARTHEST REACHES OF THE GLOBE.
THE HAVOC CAUSED BY THE LEVIATHAN THAT IS AVALON'S SUDDEN PRESENCE -- ITS VIOLATION OF EARTH'S ELECTRO-MAGNETIC FIELD -- WILL MAR THE LANDSCAPE...
...WILL RAVAGE THE CITIZENRY OF THE PLANET... FOR WEEKS TO COME.
AS THE INTENDED FUTURE HOME TO ALL MUTANTS TEARS AND SHREDS ITS WAY THROUGH THE ATMOSPHERE --
--SAVAGE WHIPPING WINDS SHRIEK ACROSS THE EASTERN SEABOARD...
...TIDES LASH AT THE COASTLINE WITH THE FURY OF A RAMPAGING HURRICANE.
BUT FAR WORSE THAN THE PHYSICAL DAMAGE -- IS THE HORROR INFLICTED UPON AN INNOCENT POPULACE.
FOR AT THIS MOMENT, WHAT HAS LONG BEEN SUSPECTED CAN NO LONGER BE DENIED.
MAGNETO HAS RETURNED.
AND NO HUMAN BEING WILL TRULY FEEL SAFE AGAIN.
IT'S NOT A HAVEN... IT'S A FORTRESS!
LADEN DOWN WITH SHI'AR WEAPONRY HE COULD ONLY HAVE APPROPRIATED DURING HIS TIME WITH THE X-MEN.
DEAR GOD IN HEAVEN...
...WHAT HAVE I DONE?
I CAN SEE NOW THAT AT LAST YOU UNDERSTAND, DON'T YOU, CHARLES?
YOU REALIZE I AM NO LONGER THE PREENING, FAWNING MAN I WAS WHEN MY MIND WAS ALTERED BY YOUR BELOVED MOIRA MACTAGGERT!
I REFUSE TO EVER AGAIN BECOME AN APOLOGIST, A NURSEMAID TO THE NEXT GENERATION OF MUTANTS FOOLISH ENOUGH TO OPT TO BECOME YOUR X-MEN!
INSTEAD, I STAND BEFORE YOU AS THE MAN I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN...
...THE FUTURE RULER OF A WORLD DOMINATED BY HOMO SUPERIOR.
COME WITH ME, CHARLES -- COME WITH ME TO AVALON AS WE AWAIT FOR THE LAND TO BE PURGED OF THAT PLAGUE CREATED BY ANOTHER OF OUR KIND!
COME AND WITNESS, FROM A DISTANCE, THE FINAL GASPING BREATH OF HUMANITY -- OF THE GREAT UNWASHED -- AS IT MAKES WAY FOR THE DESTINY THAT CANNOT BE DENIED.
EXODUS, BEGIN NOW THE ASCENSION.
OBSERVE, CHARLES, AS I TAKE THESE FROM YOU...
...AN ALMOST DOZEN MUTANTS, FREE FROM THE BONDS OF THE PERVERSE ALTRUISM IN WHICH YOU'D SEEK TO ENTOMB THEM.
NOT LONG AGO, XAVIER -- I TRIED YOUR PATH...
...NOW I ASK YOU, MY OLDEST FRIEND, DO YOU HAVE THE COURAGE TO DO WHAT I HAD DONE?
ARE YOU WILLING TO WALK DOWN MY PATH FOR A TIME?


DO YOU TRULY BELIEVE YOU ARE ATTEMPTING ANYTHING *ORIGINAL*, MAGUS?
DON'T YOU REALIZE THERE IS *LITTLE DIFFERENCE* BETWEEN YOU-- AND THE SAME MONSTER RESPONSIBLE FOR THE *DEATH* OF YOUR PARENTS AND SISTER?
CAN'T YOU SEE YOU'VE BECOME WHAT YOU HATED *MOST* IN OTHERS?!
DO NOT *DARE* COMPARE ME TO *ANY* HUMAN, CHARLES! I SEEK TO RESCUE MY-- *OUR*-- PEOPLE! AND IF OTHERS MUST *SUFFER* BECAUSE OF THAT, I AM NOT RESPONSIBLE!
BISHOP--WHAT'S *HAPPENING*?
WHAT'S WITH THE WALKING LITE BRITE?
MY MUTANT ABILITY DOES NOT *INCLUDE* AN ON-OFF SWITCH, ROBERT.
I AUTOMATICALLY ABSORB ANY ENERGY *DIRECTED* AT ME, CHANNELING IT THROUGH ME--
...ANY ENERGY INCLUDING *APPARENTLY* MAGNETO'S.
WE BOTH KNOW MUTANTS ARE NOT *LONG* FOR THIS WORLD.
WHILE RECOVERING I, *TOO*, LEARNED OF *STRYFE'S LEGACY*. I HAVE BORNE SILENT WITNESS TO THE PASSING OF *ALL* WHO HAVE FALLEN FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN THEY ARE OF *MUTANT BLOOD*.
I HAVE WEPT FOR THOSE WHO HAVE *DIED*, AND WITH THOSE TEARS AN UNSPEAKABLE, *UNSHAKABLE TRUTH* WAS REVEALED TO ME.
AND I KNOW THAT IN YOUR *HEART*, YOU SHARE THE KNOWLEDGE--
--THAT UNLESS *WE, AS A RACE, TAKE ACTION THIS MOMENT*...
"... ILLYANA WILL BE BUT THE *FIRST* OF SCORES OF INNOCENT VICTIMS TO *DIE*!"

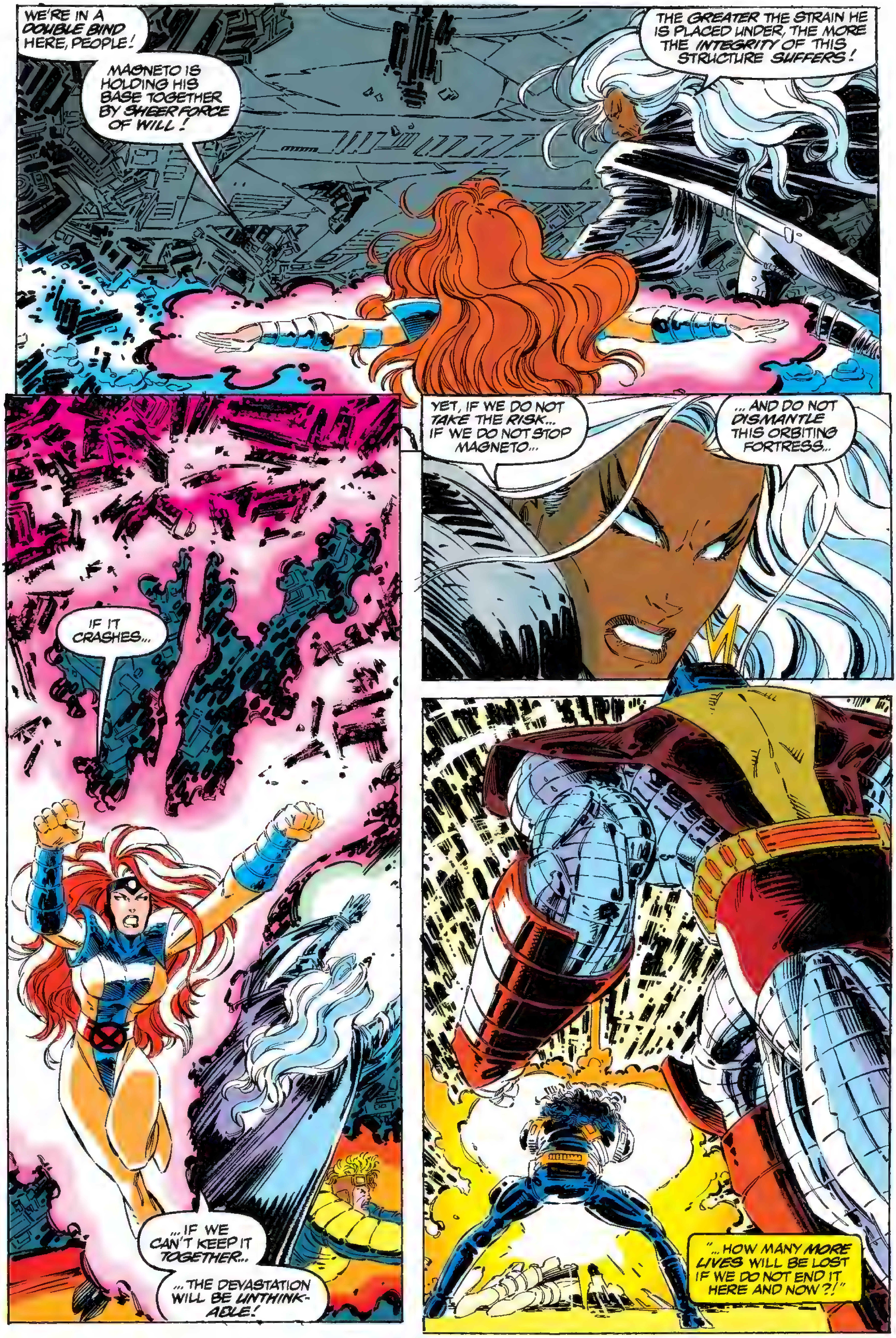

HE SENSES AN ELECTRO-MAGNETIC RUPTURE...
...THE *INSTANT* BEFORE IT HAPPENS...
EH?
AS A LIVING STORAGE CELL, EVEN *I* HAVE MY LIMITS!
ALL THE TIME YOU KEPT ME IMMOBILE--YOU WERE PROVIDING ME WITH THE VERY ENERGY I NEEDED TO FREE MYSELF...
"...ENERGY I'M RETURNING TO YOU IN *KIND!*"
KRUNCHKT!
STAND DOWN, PEOPLE! BISHOP'S ACTIONS MAY HAVE CUT US LOOSE, BUT--
IN YER *ONE EYE*, YA'--
CYCLOPS HAS A POINT, GENTLEMEN. THE *CLOSER* WE GET, THE MORE LIKELY MAGNETO WILL ONCE AGAIN *ASSERT* HIMSELF UPON OUR *BODILY FUNCTIONS*.
NEAR AS I KNOW THAT'S *ILLEGAL* IN MOST STATES.
UMMM, PROF...CAN YOU *PROMISE* ME WE'RE GONNA' LIVE THROUGH THIS?
I MEAN, WE'RE TALKING THE BIG *M* HERE...
I CAN PROMISE IT WILL *NOT* BE FOR *LACK* OF TRYING, CHILD.
I HATE TO DO THIS, BISHOP--BUT THAT "AVALON" IS *FILLED* WITH FANATICS, AND ARMED TO THE TEETH WITH *ENOUGH WEAPONS* TO REDUCE NEW YORK TO A *CINDER*.
IN... DEED.
DO WHAT... YOU... MUST...

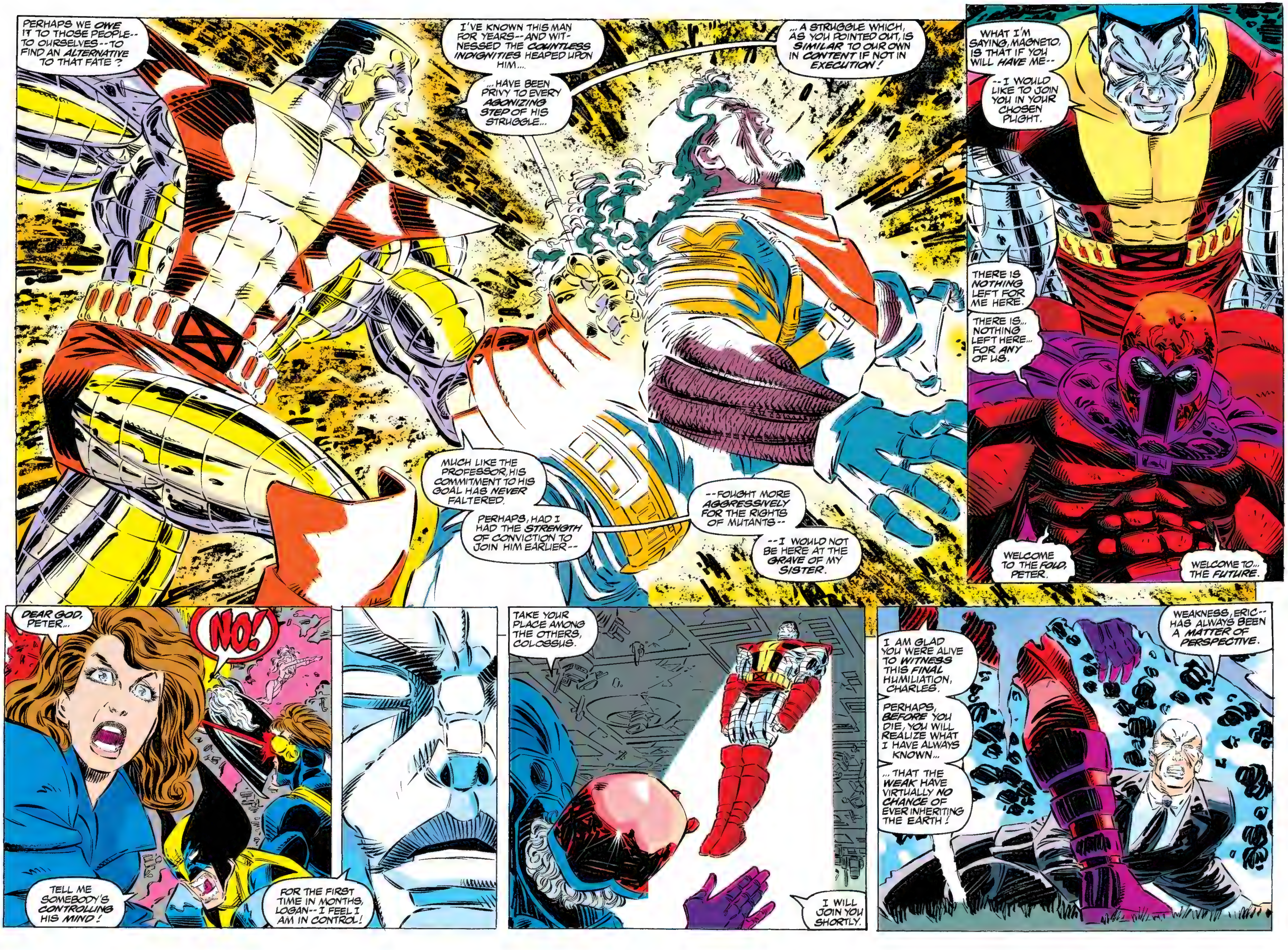
FRABOOM!
THIS--?!
THIS IS HOW YOU REPAY THE COURTESY I'VE EXTENDED TO YOU?!
HAVE YOU ALL BECOME SO BLIND TO THE HATRED IN THE EYES OF THE HUMANS--
--HAVE YOU BECOME SO DEAF THAT YOU CANNOT HEAR THE PLAINTIVE PLEA OF YOUR BRETHREN CRYING FOR SALVATION?
THIS WORLD IS NO LONGER SAFE FOR MUTANTS WHILE STRYFE'S LEGACY COULD STRIKE ANY OF US AT ANY MOMENT!
DO THESE GENETIC DEAD-ENDS-- THESE HUMANS --WHO LIVE IN RIGHTEOUS FEAR OF OUR GENETIC BIRTHRIGHT MEAN SO MUCH TO YOU--
--THAT YOU ARE WILLING TO FORFEIT YOUR OWN LIVES TO SAVE THEIRS?
FOR MAKE NO MISTAKE, X-MEN-- ALL THOSE WHO REFUSE TO JOIN ME...
...DIE HERE AND NOW WITH THESE WORTHLESS HERDS OF HUMAN CATTLE GRAZING UPON A LAND THAT IS RIGHTFULLY OURS!
BISHOP, ARE YOU CERTAIN YOU ARE UP TO THIS?!
WHAT IS YOUR LIMIT REGARDING THE NUMBER OF ENERGY SIGNATURES YOU CAN ABSORB AT ONE TIME?
AFRAID HAVOK... HAVE TO FIND OUT... T'GETHER!
THEN WE BETTER HURRY AND TAKE DOWN THE BIG M--
--'CAUSE, JUDGING BY THE WAY HOME BASE THERE IS GLOWING, HE'S ABOUT TO TURN ALL O' WESTCHESTER COUNTY INT'ONE BIG WARMED-OVER BURRITO!
ACTUALLY, IT WILL BE NOTHING MORE THAN A SMOLDERING CRATER-- A TESTAMENT TO THE WORLD THAT FOR EVERY LIFE CLAIMED BY STRYFE'S LEGACY...
...I WILL TAKE TEN THOUSAND HUMANS AS PENANCE.

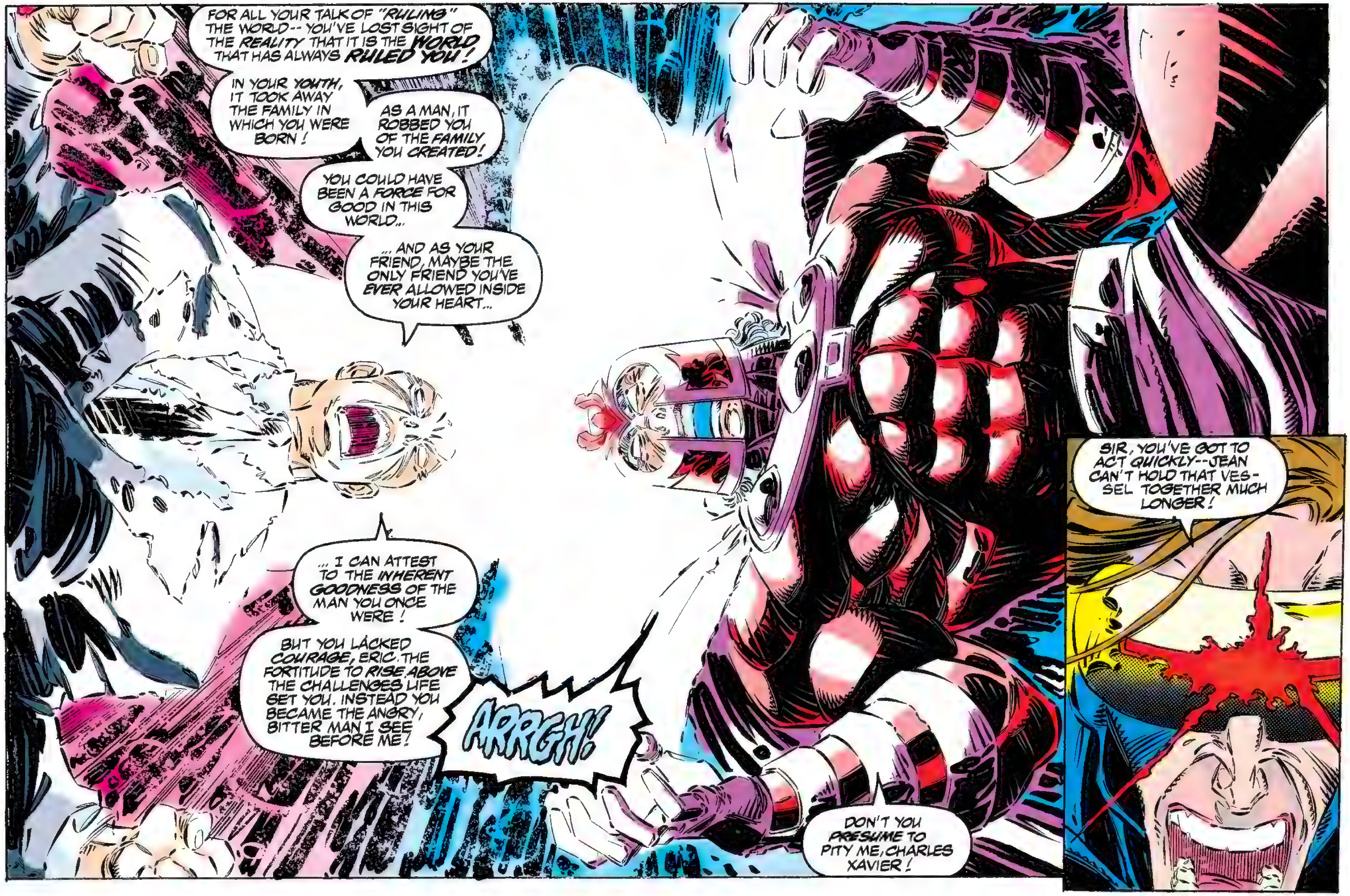

MAGNETO-- LISTEN TO YOURSELF!
STRYFE WAS A MUTANT SAME AS US--YA CAIN'T BLAME HUMANITY FOR HIS DISEASE!
CAN'T I, ROGUE?
IT IS THAT VERY HUMANITY WHICH IS ALL THAT STANDS BETWEEN MUTANTS AND OUR DIVINE RIGHT TO LIVE AS WE PLEASE.
STRYFE WAS MERELY THE FINGER UPON A TRIGGER LOADED AND AIMED AT MUTANTKIND!
NONE OF THE MUTANT FACTIONS WOULD BE FIGHTING AMONGST OURSELVES--
--IF NOT FOR THE FACT WE MUST DEFEND OUR VERY EXISTENCE FROM THOSE WHO WOULD SEE US DEAD!
AH'M SORRY AH HAVE TO DO THIS, SUGAH--
--BUT NEAR'S AH CAN TELL, IT MAY BE THE ONLY WAY T'KISS SOME SENSE INTO YA'.
?!
WHAT HAPPENED? AH WAS SUPPOSED TO ABSORB YOUR POWER!
YOU DID, AFTER A FASHION.
YOU ACTUALLY MANAGED TO STEAL A BIT--
--THE DIFFERENCE BEING, IT WAS NOT ENOUGH!
AS THE LINGERING MEMORIES THAT FLOAT UNBIDDEN THROUGH YOUR MIND--AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT--SHOULD REVEAL TO YOU... I AM NO LONGER THE MAN I WAS!
I AM STRONGER THAN I HAVE EVER BEEN--EVER HAVE IMAGINED I WOULD ONE DAY BECOME.
STEAL HALF MY POWER, AND I STILL HAVE MORE THAN ENOUGH TO ELIMINATE ANYONE WHO SEEKS TO STOP ME FROM DOING WHAT I MUST TO SAVE MY PEOPLE!

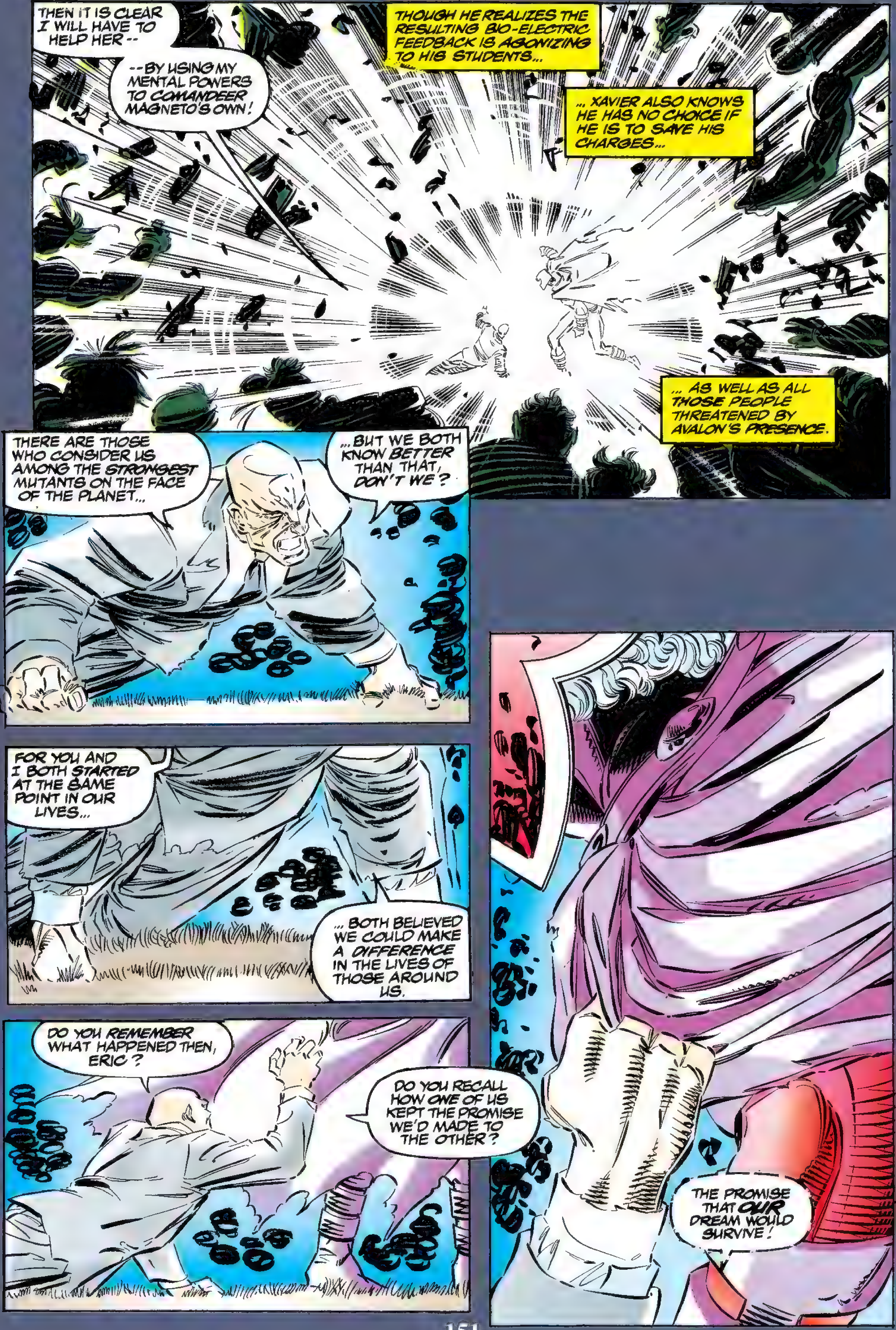

BUT THANK YOU FOR THE KISS, *NONETHELESS*.
WOK
IT SERVED AS THE *BRIEFEST*-- THE SWEETEST REMINDER OF WHAT *MIGHT* HAVE BEEN...
... WHAT MAY YET BE IF ANY OF YOU WOULD ALL *ACCEPT* THE TRUTH...
... IF YOU WOULD AT LAST SEE THE WORLD THE WAY IT *IS*, RATHER THAN THAT WHICH YOU *WOULD* SO DESPERATELY LIKE IT TO BECOME!
UNTIL THEN, YOU ARE ALL BOUND BY YOUR OWN *ARCHAIC* MORAL CODE OF PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE BETWEEN HUMANS AND MUTANTS.
UNTIL THEN YOU ARE *RESTRAINED* BY YOUR CONFUSED BELIEF THAT ALL YOUR HARD WORK, ALL YOUR SACRIFICE WILL MAKE A *BIT* OF DIFFERENCE.
DO NOT WORRY ABOUT *US*, MAGNETO--
--FOR THE *TRUTH* HAS SET US FREE LONG AGO...!

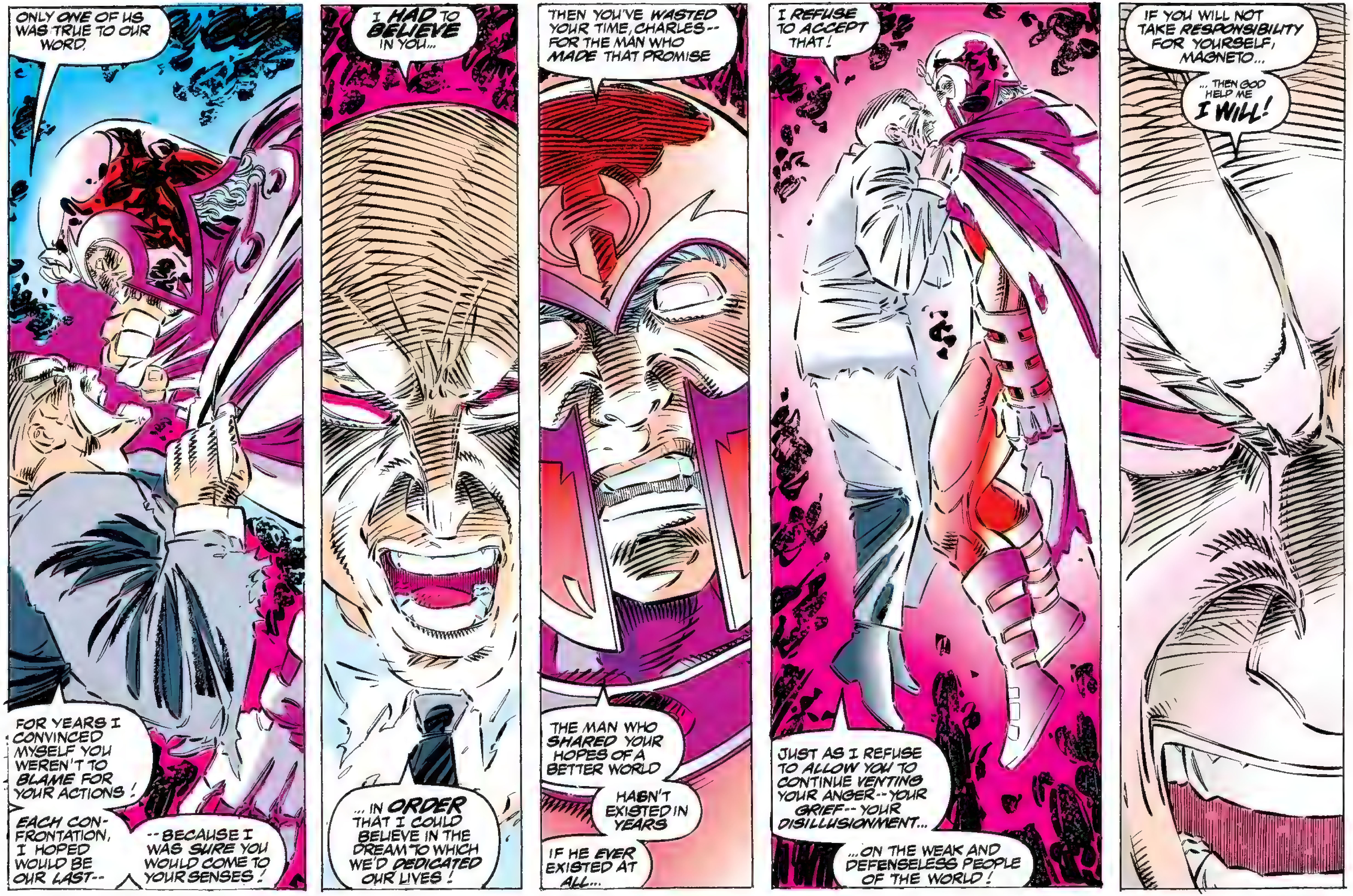
AND AT THE HEART OF THAT TRUTH LIES A BITTER IRONY.
FOR YOU AND PROFESSOR XAVIER -- AND BY EXTENSION ALL WHO WEAR THE COLORS OF THE X-MEN -- ARE ALL FIGHTING FOR THE SAME CAUSE.
IT IS ONLY THE METHODS WE'VE CHOSEN TO ADOPT, IT APPEARS, THAT WILL SEPARATE US FROM YOUR ACOLYTES FOREVER.
IT WILL BE FAR SHORTER THAN "FOREVER," CHILD!
FOR WITHIN THE HOUR THERE WILL BE NO "X-MEN," NO HUMANS TO PROTECT...
...THERE WILL BE ONLY A MASS GRAVE FOR WHICH ONLY A WORLD OF WALKING CORPSES SHALL MOURN!
LOFTY AMBITIONS, SIR.
THOUGH I'M AFRAID WE'RE NOT WITHOUT OUR OWN GAME PLAN.
IT'S CALLED SURVIVING, MAGNETO.
IT'S WHAT WE DO!

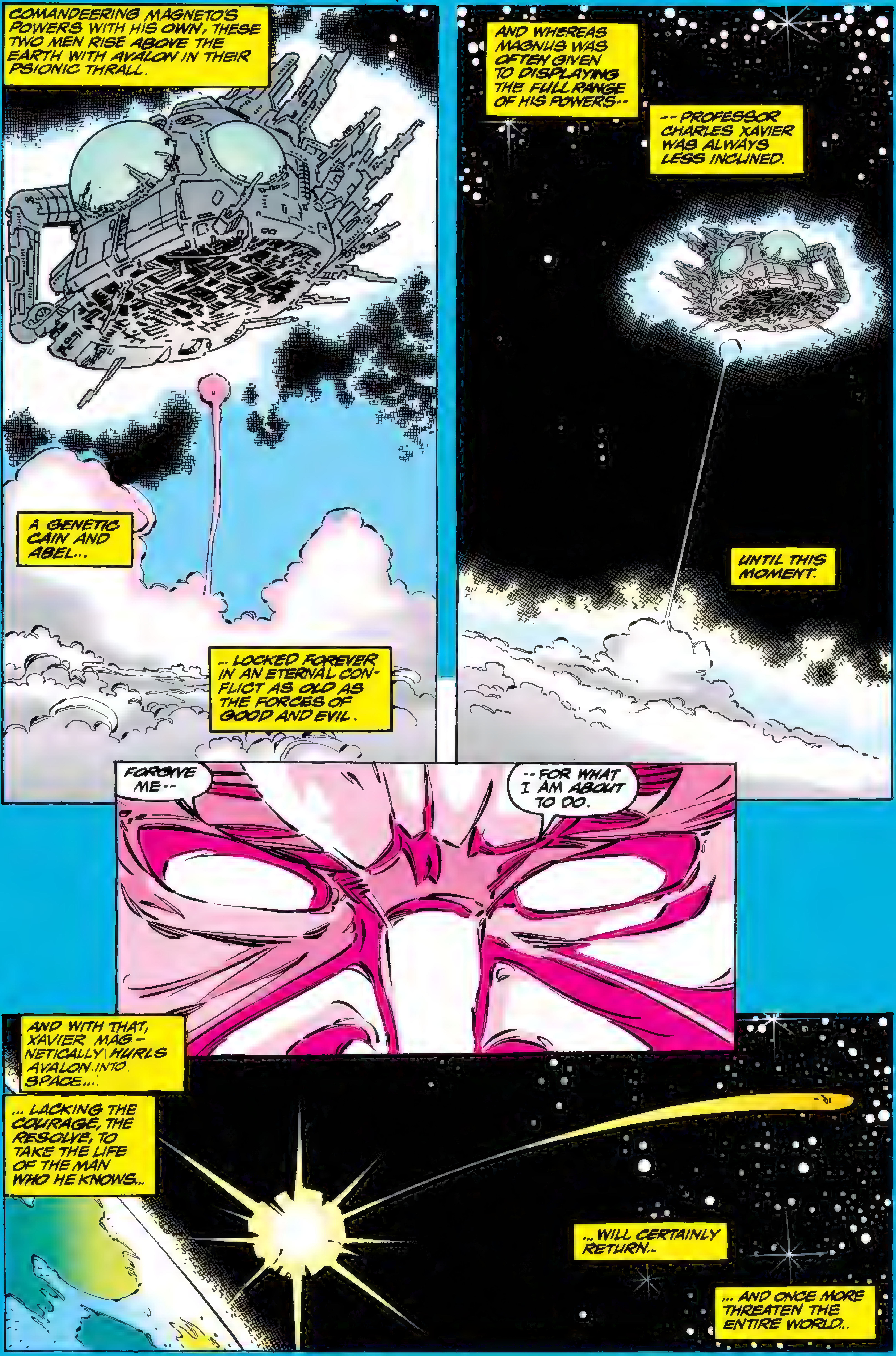

WE'RE IN A DOUBLE BIND HERE, PEOPLE!
MAGNETO IS HOLDING HIS BASE TOGETHER BY SHEER FORCE OF WILL!
THE GREATER THE STRAIN HE IS PLACED UNDER, THE MORE THE INTEGRITY OF THIS STRUCTURE SUFFERS!
IF IT CRASHES...
...IF WE CAN'T KEEP IT TOGETHER...
...THE DEVASTATION WILL BE UNTHINKABLE!
YET, IF WE DO NOT TAKE THE RISK... IF WE DO NOT STOP MAGNETO...
...AND DO NOT DISMANTLE THIS ORBITING FORTRESS...
"...HOW MANY MORE LIVES WILL BE LOST IF WE DO NOT END IT HERE AND NOW?!"

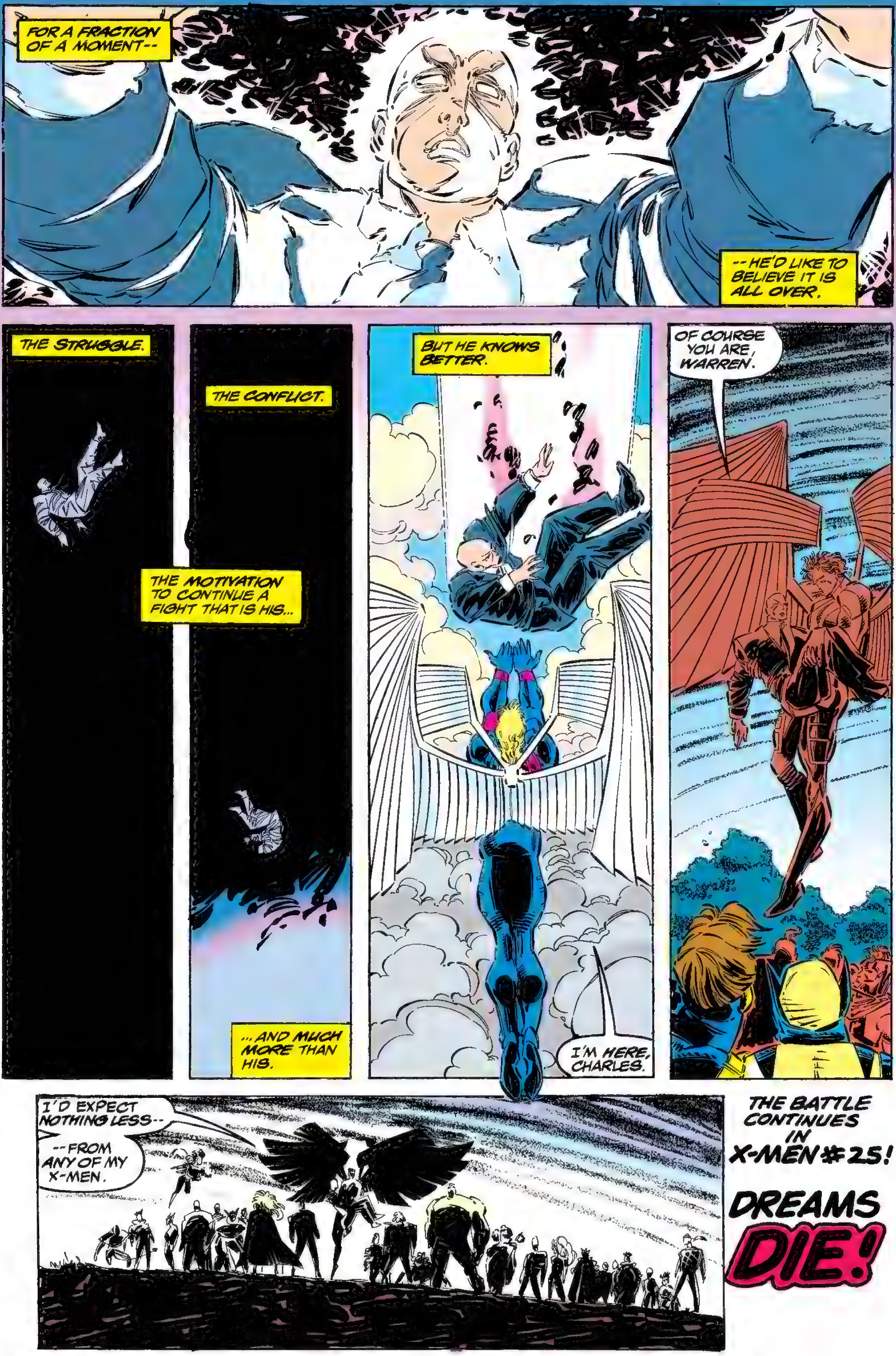

PERHAPS WE *OWE* IT TO THOSE PEOPLE-- TO OURSELVES--TO FIND AN *ALTERNATIVE* TO THAT FATE?
I'VE KNOWN THIS MAN FOR YEARS--AND WITNESSED THE *COUNTLESS INDIGNITIES* HEAPED UPON HIM....
...HAVE BEEN PRIVY TO EVERY *AGONIZING STEP* OF HIS STRUGGLE...
...A STRUGGLE WHICH, AS YOU POINTED OUT, IS *SIMILAR* TO OUR OWN IN *CONTENT* IF NOT IN *EXECUTION!*
MUCH LIKE THE PROFESSOR, HIS COMMITMENT TO HIS GOAL HAS *NEVER* FALTERED.
PERHAPS, HAD I HAD THE *STRENGTH* OF CONVICTION TO JOIN HIM EARLIER--
--FOUGHT MORE *AGGRESSIVELY* FOR THE RIGHTS OF MUTANTS--
--I WOULD NOT BE HERE AT THE *GRAVE OF MY SISTER.*
WHAT I'M SAYING, MAGNETO, IS THAT IF YOU WILL *HAVE* ME--
--I WOULD LIKE TO JOIN YOU IN YOUR CHOSEN PLIGHT.
THERE IS *NOTHING* LEFT FOR ME HERE.
THERE IS... NOTHING LEFT HERE... FOR *ANY* OF US.
WELCOME TO THE *FOLD,* PETER.
WELCOME TO... THE *FUTURE.*
DEAR GOD, PETER...
NO!
TELL ME SOMEBODY'S *CONTROLLING* HIS *MIND!*
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MONTHS, LOGAN--I FEEL I AM IN CONTROL!
TAKE YOUR PLACE AMONG THE OTHERS, COLOSSUS.
I WILL JOIN YOU SHORTLY.
I AM GLAD YOU WERE ALIVE TO *WITNESS* THIS *FINAL* HUMILIATION, CHARLES.
PERHAPS, *BEFORE* YOU DIE, YOU WILL *REALIZE* WHAT I HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN...
...THAT THE *WEAK* HAVE VIRTUALLY *NO CHANCE* OF EVER INHERITING THE EARTH!
WEAKNESS, ERIC-- HAS ALWAYS BEEN A *MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE.*


FOR ALL YOUR TALK OF "RULING" THE WORLD-- YOU'VE LOST SIGHT OF THE REALITY THAT IT IS THE WORLD THAT HAS ALWAYS RULED YOU!
IN YOUR YOUTH, IT TOOK AWAY THE FAMILY IN WHICH YOU WERE BORN!
AS A MAN, IT ROBBED YOU OF THE FAMILY YOU CREATED!
YOU COULD HAVE BEEN A FORCE FOR GOOD IN THIS WORLD...
... AND AS YOUR FRIEND, MAYBE THE ONLY FRIEND YOU'VE EVER ALLOWED INSIDE YOUR HEART...
... I CAN ATTEST TO THE INHERENT GOODNESS OF THE MAN YOU ONCE WERE!
BUT YOU LACKED COURAGE, ERIC. THE FORTITUDE TO RISE ABOVE THE CHALLENGES LIFE SET YOU. INSTEAD YOU BECAME THE ANGRY, BITTER MAN I SEE BEFORE ME!
ARRGH!
DON'T YOU PRESUME TO PITY ME, CHARLES XAVIER!
SIR, YOU'VE GOT TO ACT QUICKLY--JEAN CAN'T HOLD THAT VESSEL TOGETHER MUCH LONGER!


THEN IT IS CLEAR I WILL HAVE TO HELP HER --
--BY USING MY MENTAL POWERS TO COMANDEER MAGNETO'S OWN!
THOUGH HE REALIZES THE RESULTING BIO-ELECTRIC FEEDBACK IS AGONIZING TO HIS STUDENTS...
... XAVIER ALSO KNOWS HE HAS NO CHOICE IF HE IS TO SAVE HIS CHARGES...
... AS WELL AS ALL THOSE PEOPLE THREATENED BY AVALON'S PRESENCE.
THERE ARE THOSE WHO CONSIDER US AMONG THE STRONGEST MUTANTS ON THE FACE OF THE PLANET...
...BUT WE BOTH KNOW BETTER THAN THAT, DON'T WE?
FOR YOU AND I BOTH STARTED AT THE SAME POINT IN OUR LIVES...
... BOTH BELIEVED WE COULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF THOSE AROUND US.
DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED THEN, ERIC?
DO YOU RECALL HOW ONE OF US KEPT THE PROMISE WE'D MADE TO THE OTHER?
THE PROMISE THAT OUR DREAM WOULD SURVIVE!


ONLY ONE OF US WAS TRUE TO OUR WORD.
FOR YEARS I CONVINCED MYSELF YOU WEREN'T TO BLAME FOR YOUR ACTIONS!
EACH CONFRONTATION, I HOPED WOULD BE OUR LAST--
--BECAUSE I WAS SURE YOU WOULD COME TO YOUR SENSES!
I HAD TO BELIEVE IN YOU...
...IN ORDER THAT I COULD BELIEVE IN THE DREAM TO WHICH WE'D DEDICATED OUR LIVES!
THEN YOU'VE WASTED YOUR TIME, CHARLES-- FOR THE MAN WHO MADE THAT PROMISE
THE MAN WHO SHARED YOUR HOPES OF A BETTER WORLD
HASN'T EXISTED IN YEARS
IF HE EVER EXISTED AT ALL...
I REFUSE TO ACCEPT THAT!
JUST AS I REFUSE TO ALLOW YOU TO CONTINUE VENTING YOUR ANGER--YOUR GRIEF--YOUR DISILLUSIONMENT...
...ON THE WEAK AND DEFENSELESS PEOPLE OF THE WORLD!
IF YOU WILL NOT TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOURSELF, MAGNETO...
...THEN GOD HELP ME I WILL!


COMANDEERING MAGNETO'S POWERS WITH HIS OWN, THESE TWO MEN RISE ABOVE THE EARTH WITH AVALON IN THEIR PSIONIC THRALL.
A GENETIC CAIN AND ABEL...
...LOCKED FOREVER IN AN ETERNAL CONFLICT AS OLD AS THE FORCES OF GOOD AND EVIL.
AND WHEREAS MAGNUS WAS OFTEN GIVEN TO DISPLAYING THE FULL RANGE OF HIS POWERS--
--PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER WAS ALWAYS LESS INCLINED.
UNTIL THIS MOMENT.
FORGIVE ME--
--FOR WHAT I AM ABOUT TO DO.
AND WITH THAT, XAVIER MAGNETICALLY HURLS AVALON INTO SPACE...
...LACKING THE COURAGE, THE RESOLVE, TO TAKE THE LIFE OF THE MAN WHO HE KNOWS...
...WILL CERTAINLY RETURN...
...AND ONCE MORE THREATEN THE ENTIRE WORLD...


FOR A FRACTION OF A MOMENT--
--HE'D LIKE TO BELIEVE IT IS ALL OVER.
THE STRUGGLE.
THE CONFLICT.
THE MOTIVATION TO CONTINUE A FIGHT THAT IS HIS...
...AND MUCH MORE THAN HIS.
BUT HE KNOWS BETTER.
I'M HERE, CHARLES.
OF COURSE YOU ARE, WARREN.
I'D EXPECT NOTHING LESS--
--FROM ANY OF MY X-MEN.
THE BATTLE CONTINUES IN X-MEN #25!
DREAMS DIE!

A STAN LEE PRESENTATION

...FOR WHAT I HAVE DONE

SCOTT LOBDELL
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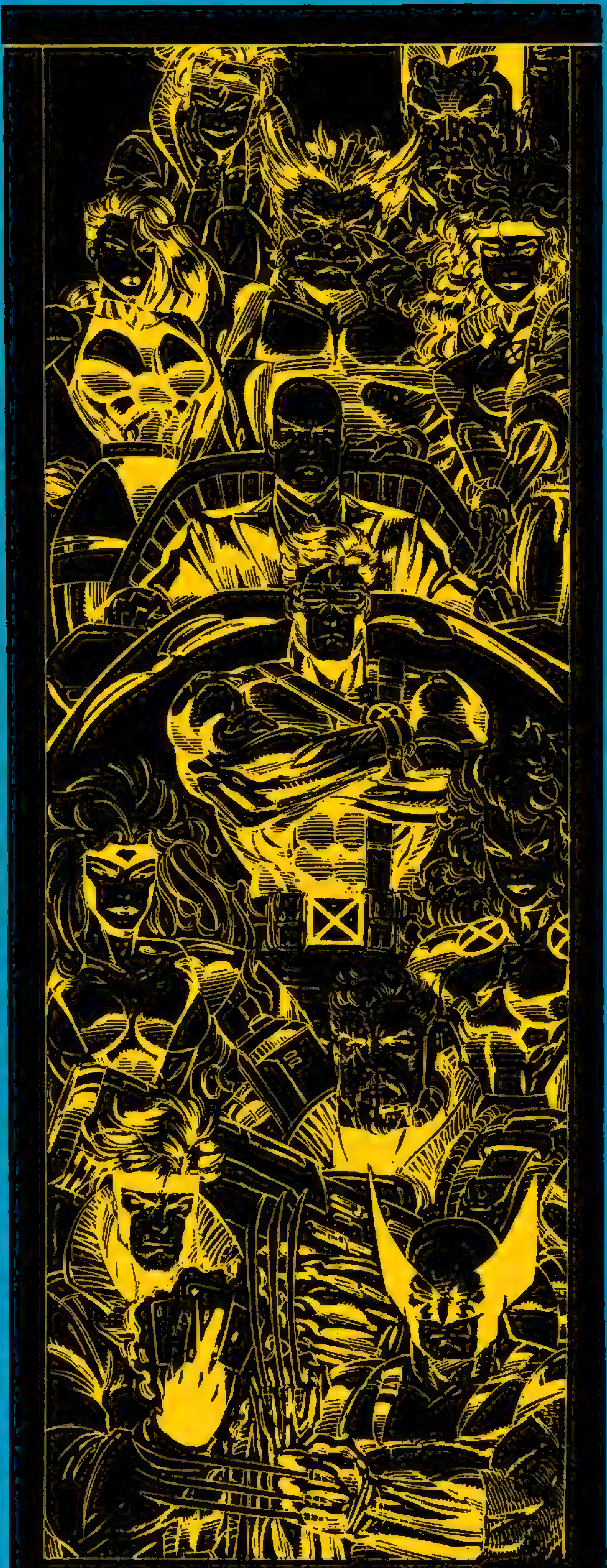
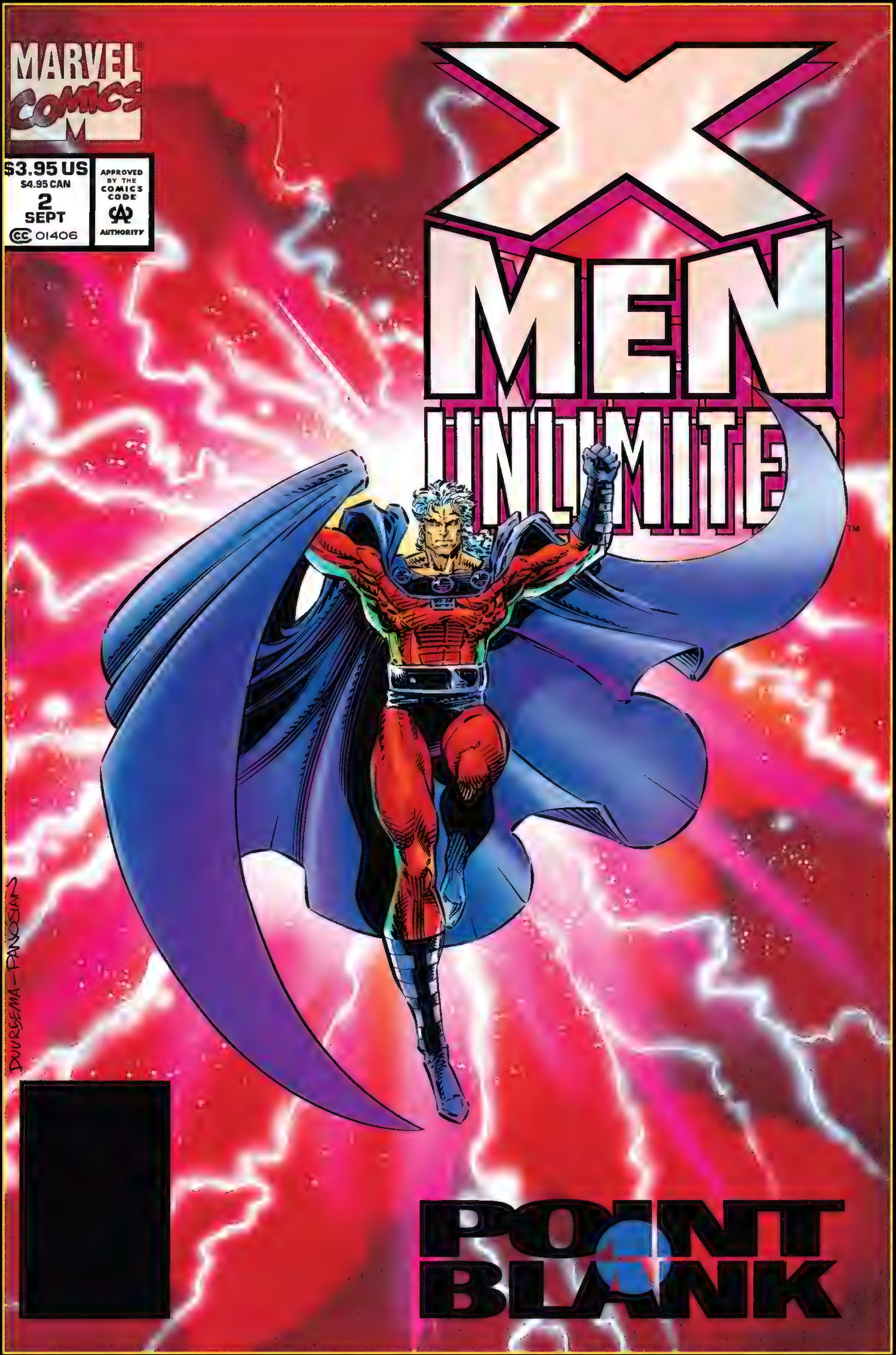


On this, our 30th anniversary, we'd like to especially thank the following very talented gentlemen...Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Len Wein, Dave Cockrum, John Byrne and Chris Claremont.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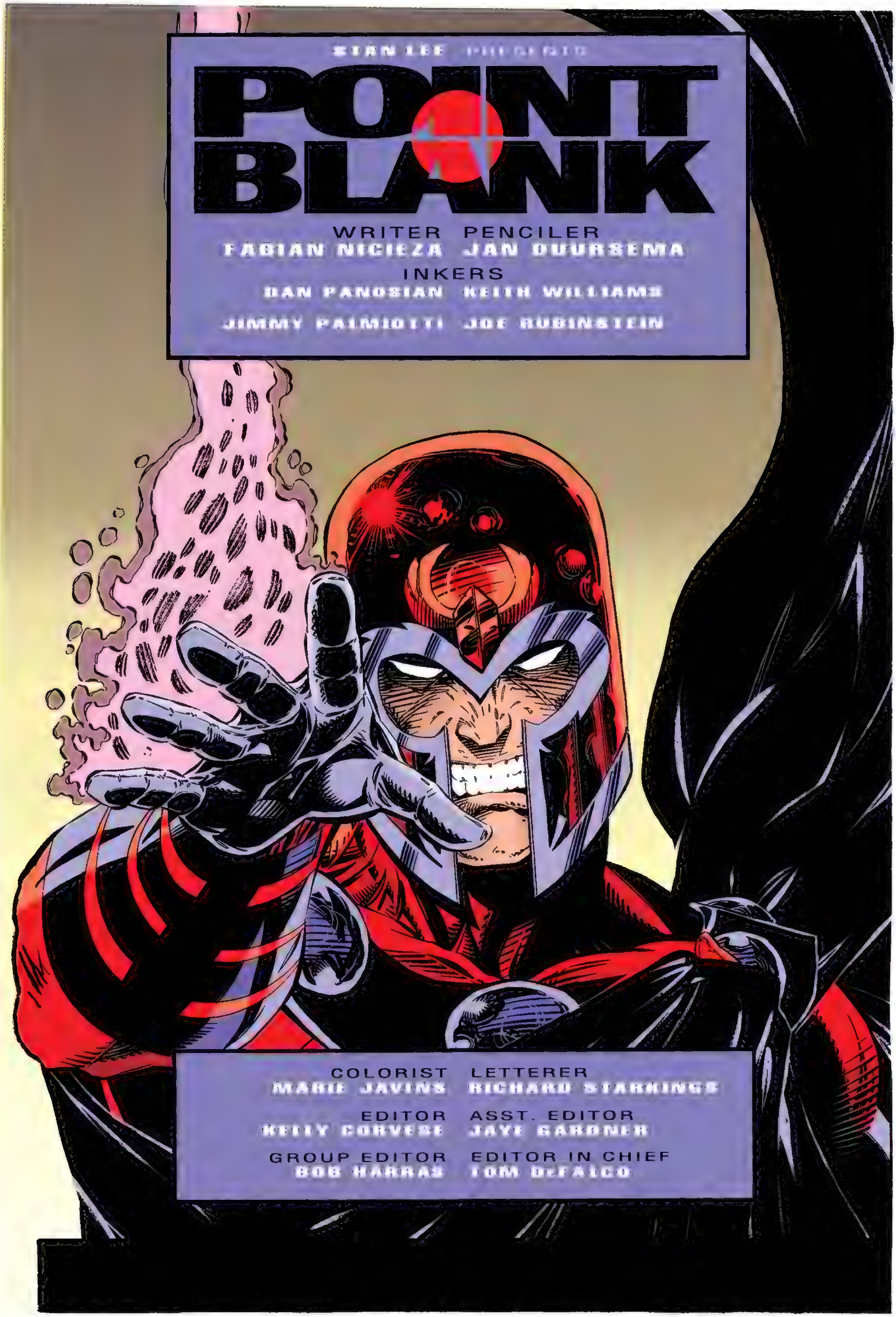

STAN LEE PRESENTS

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PENCILER JAN DUURSEMA
INKERS
DAN PANOSIAN KEITH WILLIAMS
JIMMY PALMIOTTI JOE RUBINSTEIN

COLORIST MARIE JAVINS
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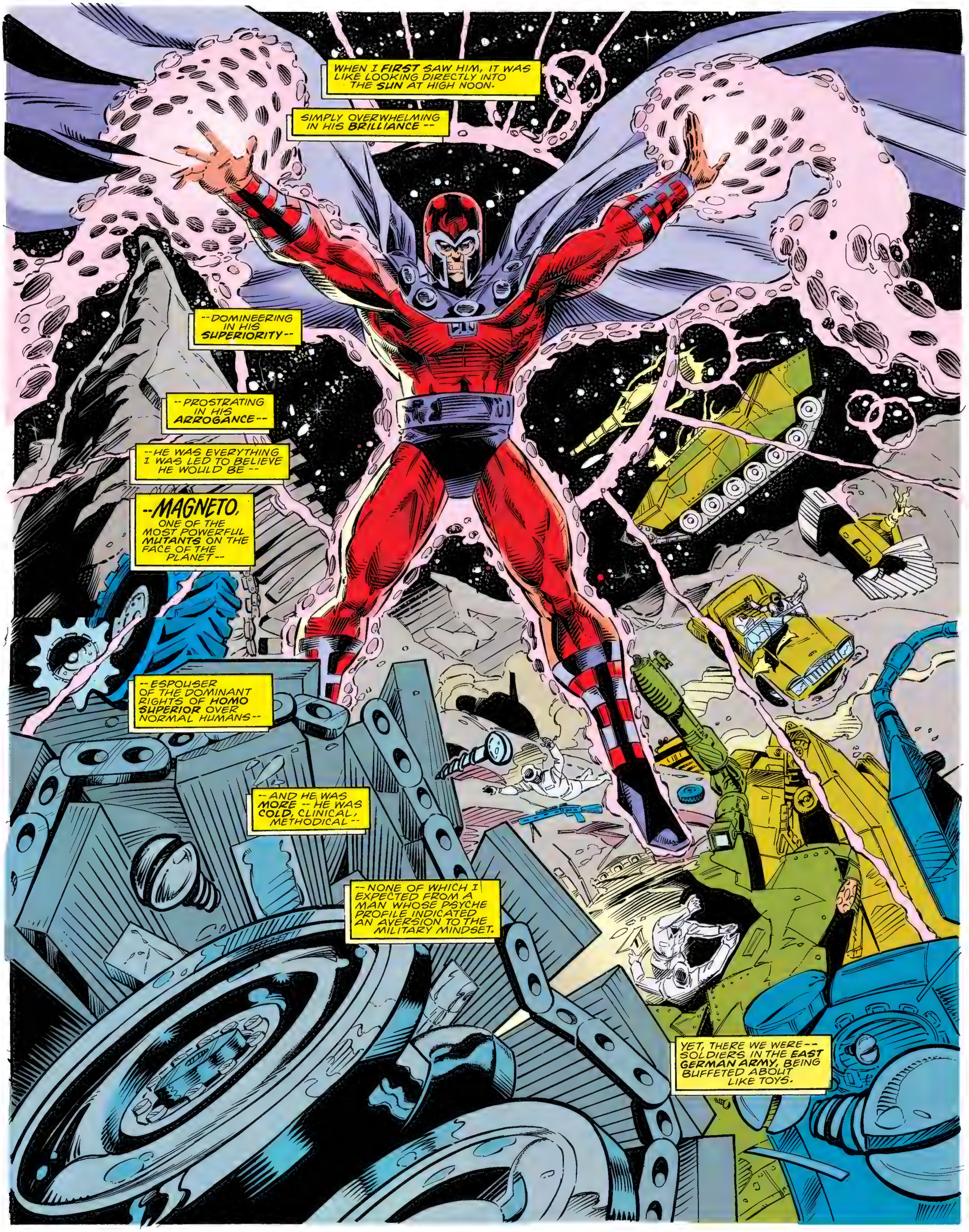
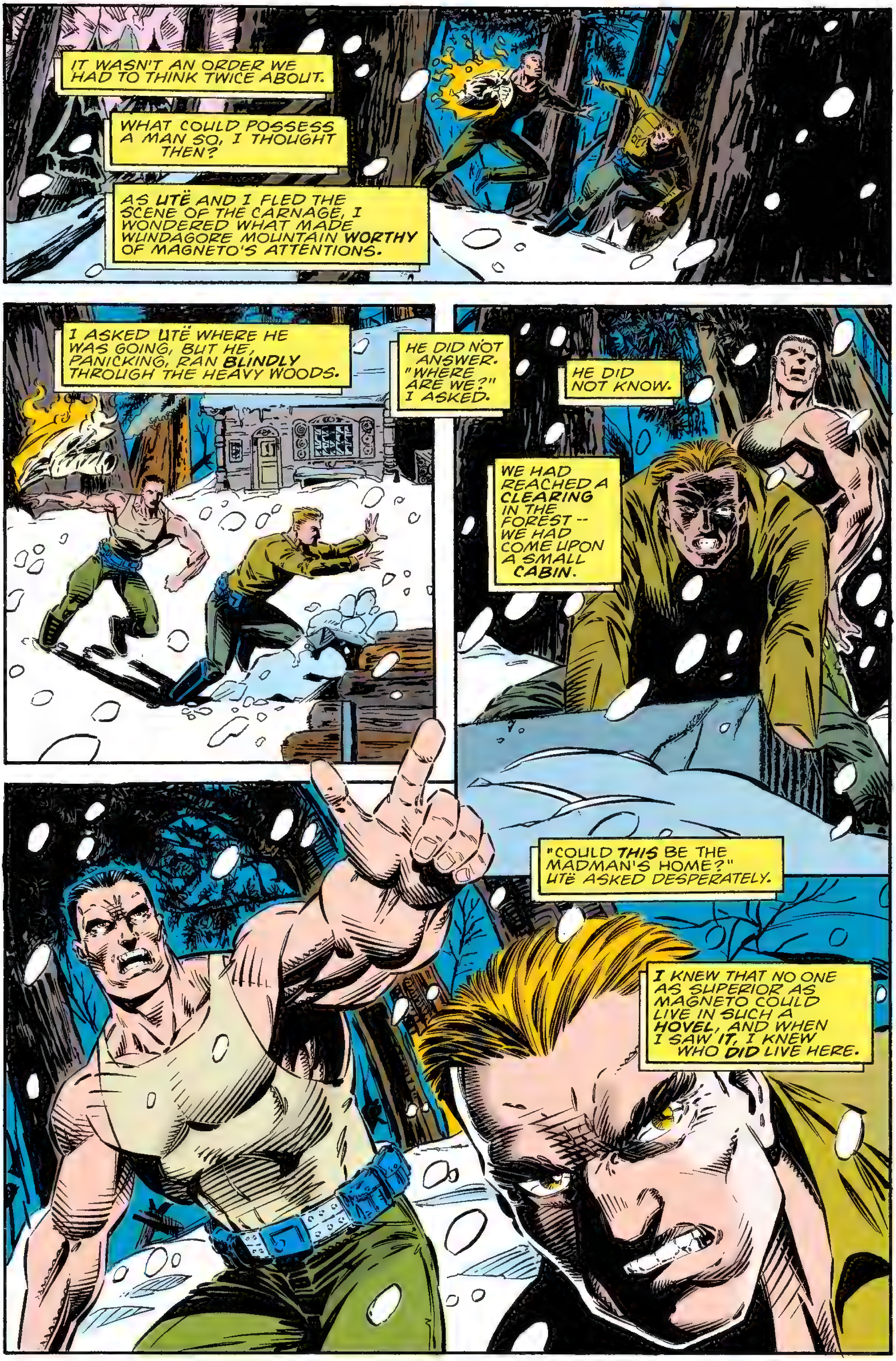
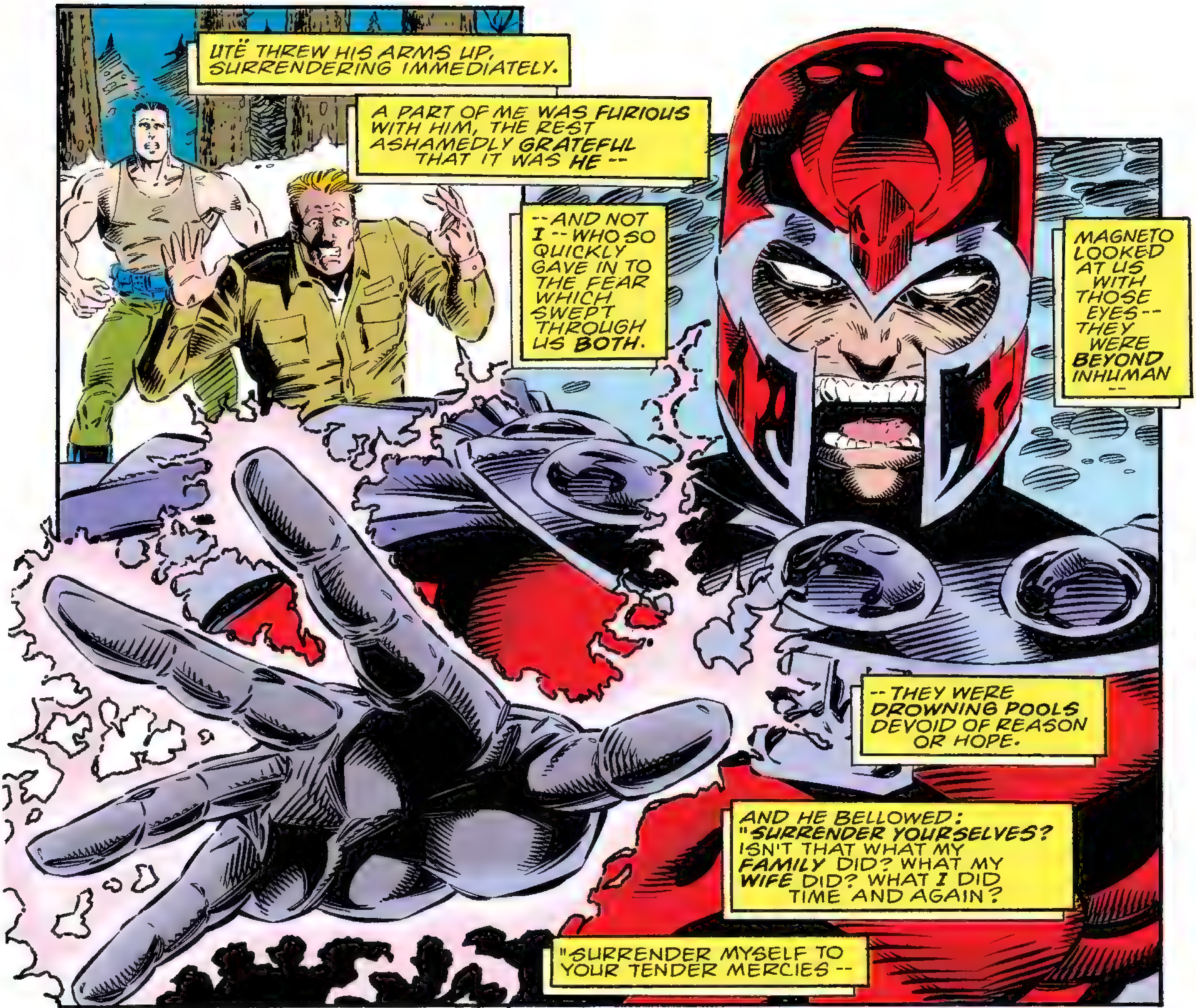
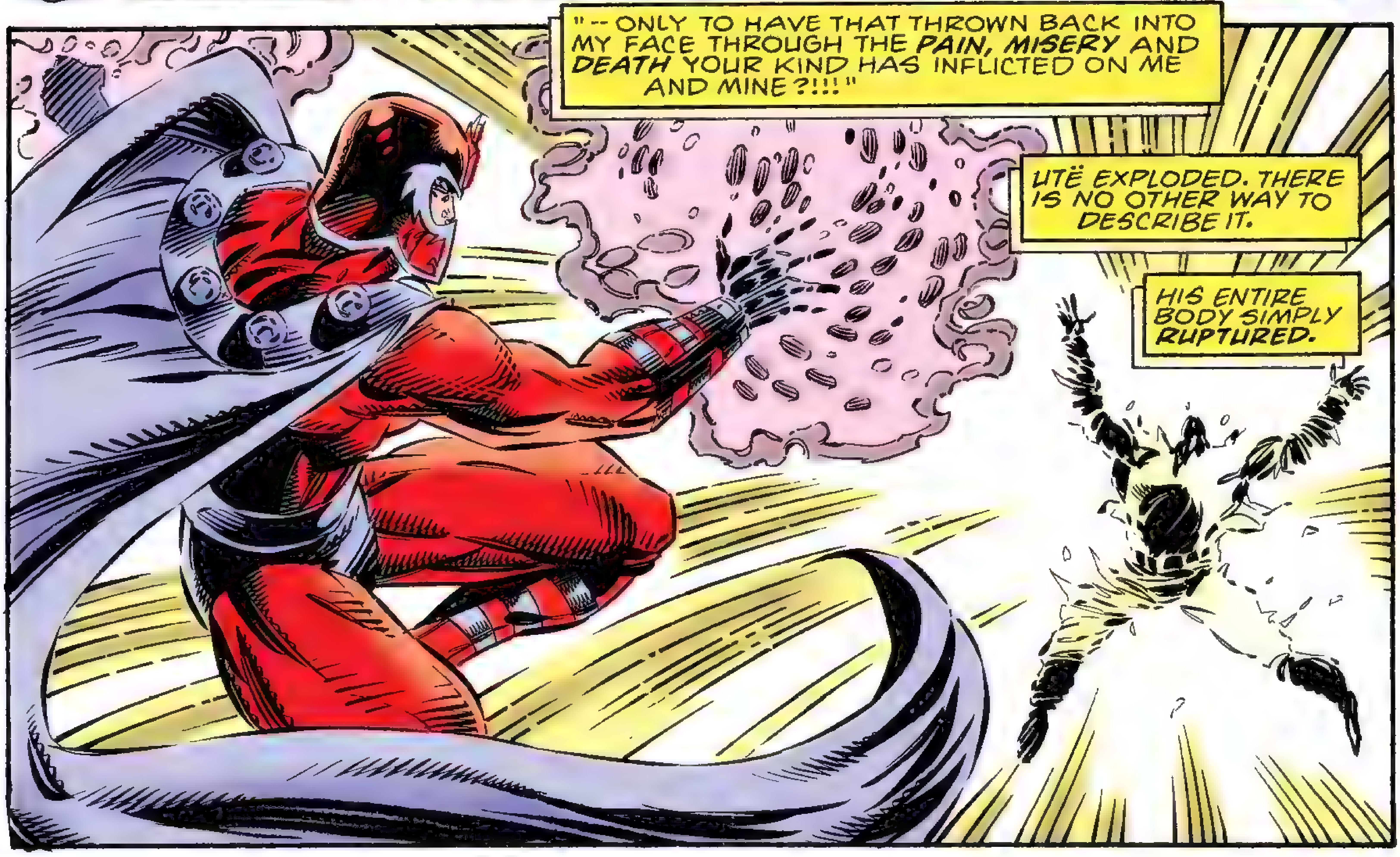

WHEN I **FIRST** SAW HIM, IT WAS LIKE LOOKING DIRECTLY INTO THE **SUN** AT HIGH NOON.
SIMPLY OVERWHELMING IN HIS **BRILLIANCE** --
--DOMINEERING IN HIS **SUPERIORITY**--
--PROSTRATING IN HIS **ARROGANCE**--
--HE WAS EVERYTHING I WAS LED TO BELIEVE HE WOULD BE --
--**MAGNETO,** ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL **MUTANTS** ON THE FACE OF THE PLANET--
--ESPOUSER OF THE DOMINANT RIGHTS OF **HOMO SUPERIOR** OVER NORMAL HUMANS--
--AND HE WAS **MORE** -- HE WAS **COLD,** CLINICAL, METHODICAL--
--NONE OF WHICH I EXPECTED FROM A MAN WHOSE PSYCHE PROFILE INDICATED AN AVERSION TO THE MILITARY MINDSET.
YET, THERE WE WERE-- SOLDIERS IN THE **EAST GERMAN ARMY**, BEING BUFFETED ABOUT LIKE TOYS.

HIS CONTROL OVER THE ELECTRO-MAGNETIC FIELD WAS **FRIGHTENING** IN ITS APPLICATIONS.
BULLETS AIMED AT HIS HEART FOUND THEIR WAY BACK TO THE TRIGGER MEN.
THE IRON IN OUR BLOOD WAS USED TO CAUSE SEIZURES AND STROKES.
TANKS WHICH I HAD SEEN CRUSH MORTAR AND BONE ALIKE WERE RENT ASUNDER, AS IF MADE OF TISSUE PAPER.
THE AIR BURNED, THE WIND SCREAMED, AND THROUGH THE DIN, HIS VOICE COULD BE HEARD LIKE THE SNARLING OF A RABID **WOLF**...
"YOU WILL **NOT** TAKE **WUNDAGORE MOUNTAIN** FOR YOUR OWN!
"I WILL NOT ALLOW YOU TO TREAD SO CALLOUSLY UPON **CONSECRATED** GROUND," I HEARD HIM BELLOW AS OUR COMMANDER CRIED FOR A STRATEGIC WITHDRAWAL.

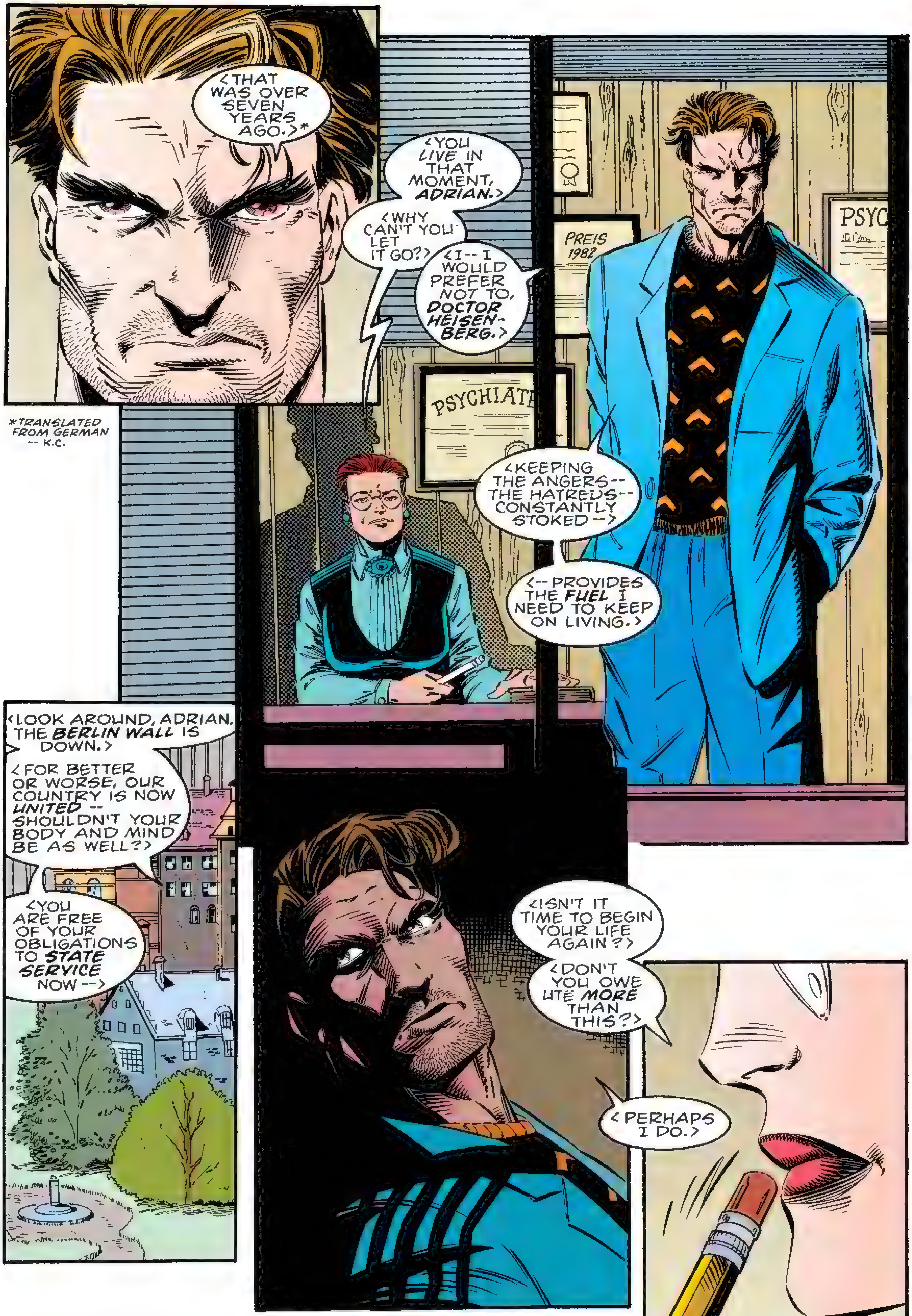

IT WASN'T AN ORDER WE HAD TO THINK TWICE ABOUT.
WHAT COULD POSSESS A MAN SO, I THOUGHT THEN?
AS UTË AND I FLED THE SCENE OF THE CARNAGE, I WONDERED WHAT MADE WUNDAGORE MOUNTAIN WORTHY OF MAGNETO'S ATTENTIONS.
I ASKED UTË WHERE HE WAS GOING, BUT HE, PANICKING, RAN BLINDLY THROUGH THE HEAVY WOODS.
HE DID NOT ANSWER. "WHERE ARE WE?" I ASKED.
HE DID NOT KNOW.
WE HAD REACHED A CLEARING IN THE FOREST -- WE HAD COME UPON A SMALL CABIN.
"COULD THIS BE THE MADMAN'S HOME?" UTË ASKED DESPERATELY.
I KNEW THAT NO ONE AS SUPERIOR AS MAGNETO COULD LIVE IN SUCH A HOVEL, AND WHEN I SAW IT, I KNEW WHO DID LIVE HERE.

THAT CREATURE DID.
THAT HIDEOUS WOMAN THAT WAS CERTAINLY NOT HUMAN -- AND YET NOT ANIMAL. THE COW-LIKE THING.
SHE LOOKED AS TERRIFIED AS WE MUST HAVE.
THEN, IN A COARSE, DRY VOICE, SHE SAID, "RUN-- SAVE YOURSELVES!"
UTË MUTTERED SOMETHING ABOUT A TOMBSTONE, I'M NOT SURE WHAT.
I WAS WATCHING THE COW-WOMAN FLEE INTO THE DARKNESS.
I WAS LOOKING WITH DETACHED CURIOSITY AS THE LEAVES AND BRANCHES ABOVE MY HEAD WHIPPED TO AND FRO' --
--I WAS WATCHING THE MONSTER FROM HELL CALMLY ALIGHT ON THE SNOW-SWEPT GROUND.
I WAS STARING AT MY OWN IMPENDING DEATH WITH AN ALMOST BEMUSED INDIFFERENCE.
" YOU HAVE DISTURBED MY WIFE'S ETERNAL SLEEP," HE SAID WITH A VOICE NOW CHOKING IN CONTAINED FURY.
"HAVE YOU NO RESPECT?"


UTË THREW HIS ARMS UP, SURRENDERING IMMEDIATELY.
A PART OF ME WAS FURIOUS WITH HIM, THE REST ASHAMEDLY GRATEFUL THAT IT WAS HE --
--AND NOT I -- WHO SO QUICKLY GAVE IN TO THE FEAR WHICH SWEPT THROUGH US BOTH.
MAGNETO LOOKED AT US WITH THOSE EYES -- THEY WERE BEYOND INHUMAN --
-- THEY WERE DROWNING POOLS DEVOID OF REASON OR HOPE.
AND HE BELLOWED: "SURRENDER YOURSELVES? ISN'T THAT WHAT MY FAMILY DID? WHAT MY WIFE DID? WHAT I DID TIME AND AGAIN?
"SURRENDER MYSELF TO YOUR TENDER MERCIES --

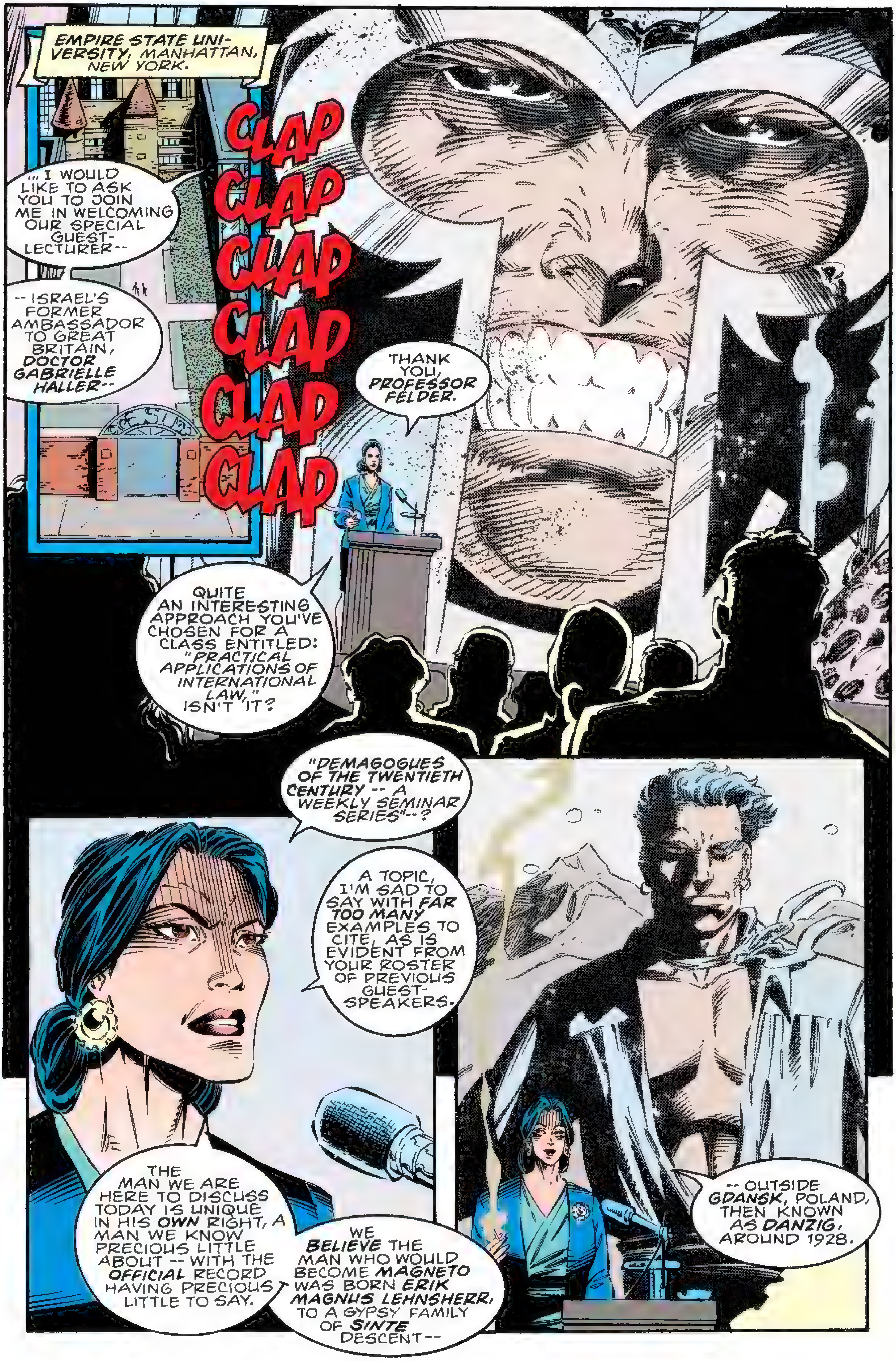

" -- ONLY TO HAVE THAT THROWN BACK INTO MY FACE THROUGH THE PAIN, MISERY AND DEATH YOUR KIND HAS INFLICTED ON ME AND MINE?!!!"
UTË EXPLODED. THERE IS NO OTHER WAY TO DESCRIBE IT.
HIS ENTIRE BODY SIMPLY RUPTURED.

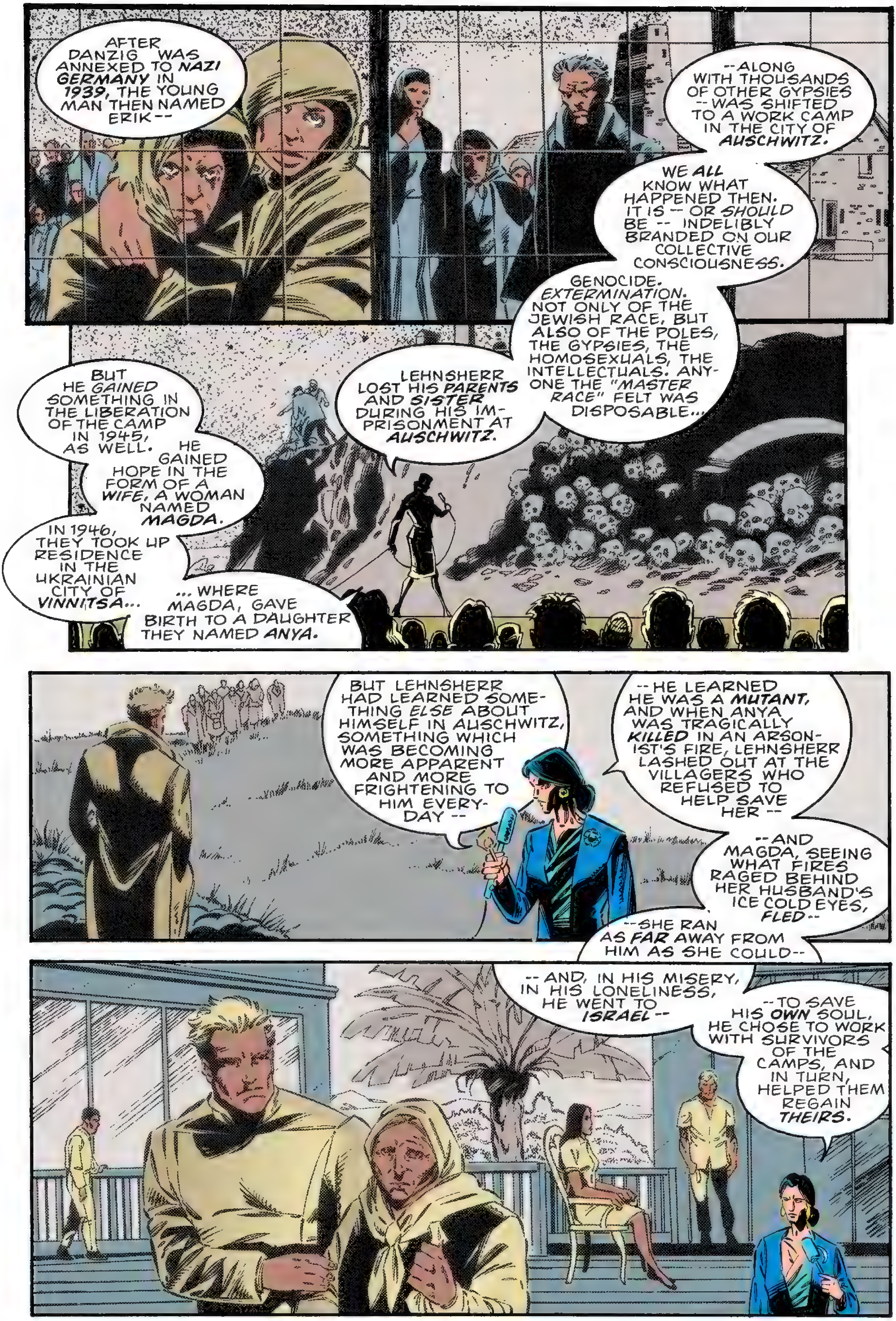
I WATCHED AS HIS MUTILATED BODY FELL BEFORE ME. I WAS **BEYOND** FEAR, BEYOND COMPREHENSION.
WHEN I LOOKED DOWN AT THE SMOLDERING REMAINS OF UTE, THE MONSTER'S VOICE SOFTENED.
"SHE ALWAYS DID SAY I WOULD BRING VIOLENCE TO HER," HE WHISPERED.
"WHEN I LEARNED THAT THIS WAS THE LAST PLACE SHE MAY HAVE KNOWN **HOPE** -- WHERE OUR **TWIN CHILDREN** WERE BORN -- I BUILT A MONUMENT TO HER.
"I SWORE **NEVER** TO ALLOW BLOOD TO BE SPILLED HERE.
"IT IS TOO LATE FOR THAT NOW, BECAUSE OF YOUR CORRUPT GOVERNMENT'S DESIRE FOR THIS MOUNTAIN'S MARVELS, IT IS TOO LATE...
"GO NOW," HE MUTTERED, HIS RAGE BUILDING AGAIN. "TAKE YOUR FELLOW SOLDIER WITH YOU AND **GO**."
"HE WAS **MORE** THAN MY TROOPMATE," I CRIED, MY ANGER AT THIS **BUTCHER** SUPERSEDING MY SENSE OF SURVIVAL.
"HE WAS MY **BROTHER!**"
AND WHAT HE SAID NEXT, I'LL **NEVER** FORGET... HE SAID, "SO THEN **YOU** NOW KNOW THE PAIN OF **LOSS** AS SHARPLY AS DO **I**.
"NOT MUCH DIFFERENCE BETWEEN **HUMAN** PAIN AND **MUTANT** PAIN IS THERE?"
AND HE LEFT.

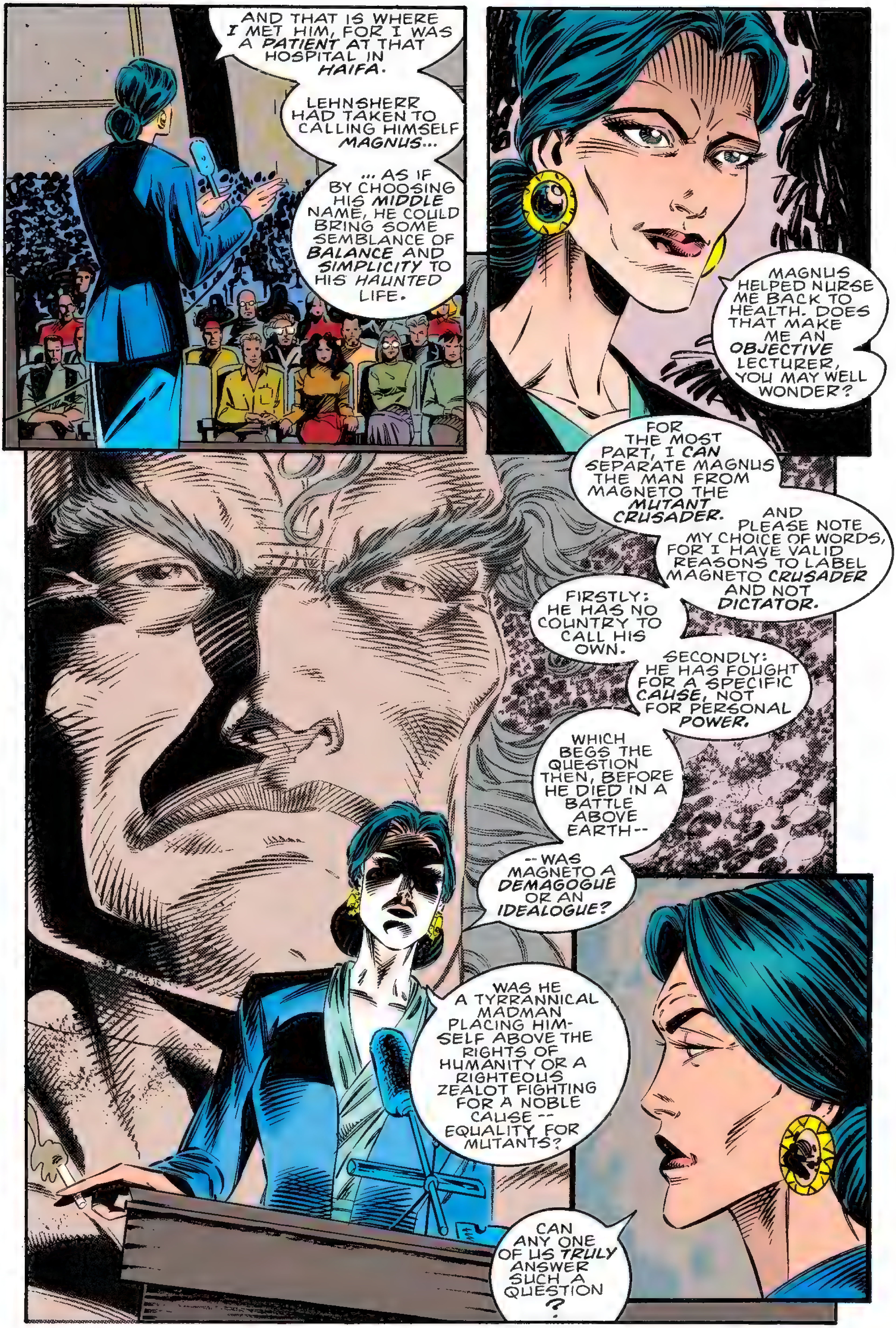

<THAT WAS OVER SEVEN YEARS AGO.>*
<YOU LIVE IN THAT MOMENT, ADRIAN.>
<WHY CAN'T YOU LET IT GO?>
<I-- I WOULD PREFER NOT TO, DOCTOR HEISENBERG.>
PREIS 1982
PSYC
PSYCHIAT
<KEEPING THE ANGERS-- THE HATREDS-- CONSTANTLY STOKED -->
<-- PROVIDES THE FUEL I NEED TO KEEP ON LIVING.>
<LOOK AROUND, ADRIAN. THE BERLIN WALL IS DOWN.>
<FOR BETTER OR WORSE, OUR COUNTRY IS NOW UNITED -- SHOULDN'T YOUR BODY AND MIND BE AS WELL?>
<YOU ARE FREE OF YOUR OBLIGATIONS TO STATE SERVICE NOW -->
<ISN'T IT TIME TO BEGIN YOUR LIFE AGAIN?>
<DON'T YOU OWE LIFE MORE THAN THIS?>
<PERHAPS I DO.>

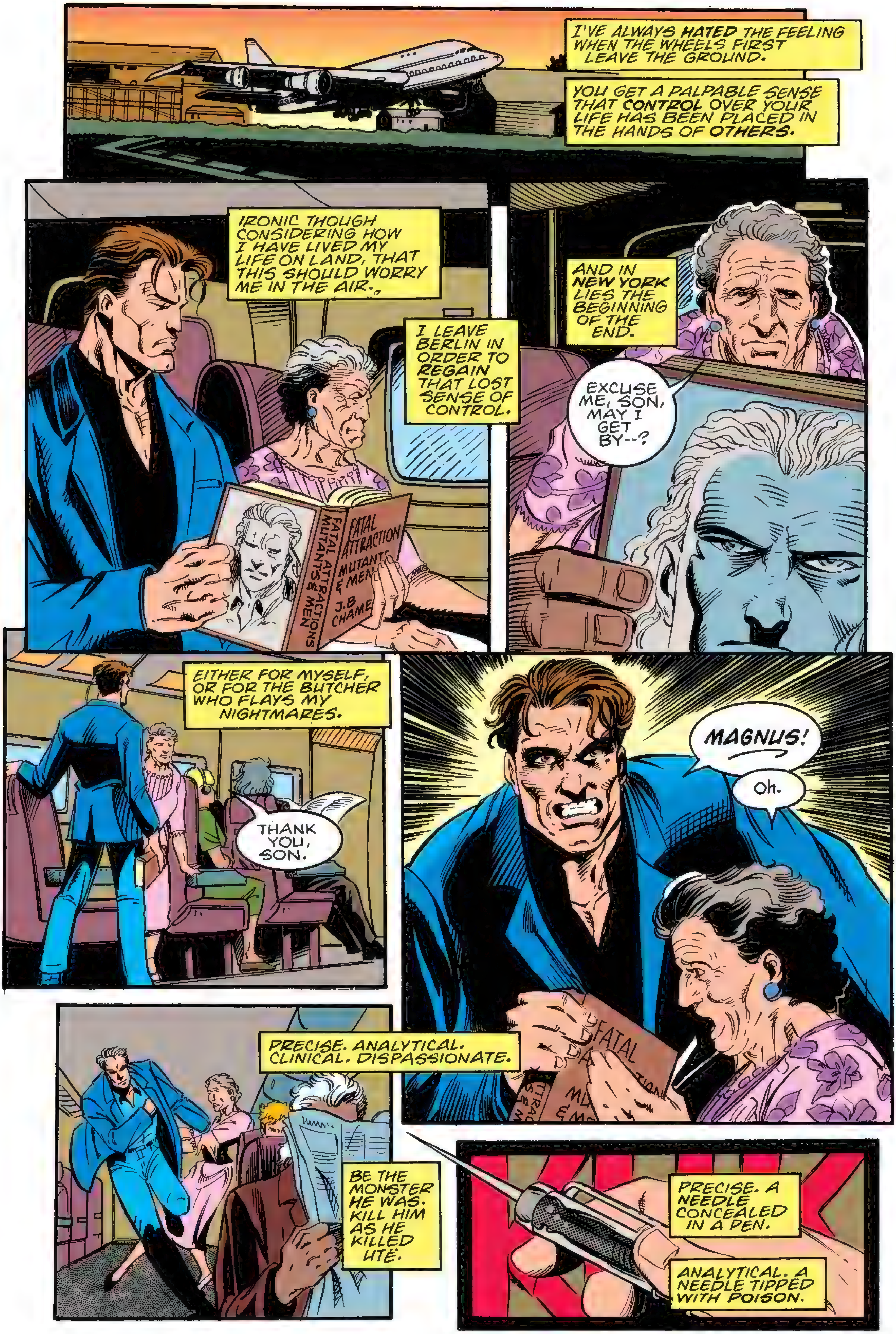
*TRANSLATED FROM GERMAN -- K.C.

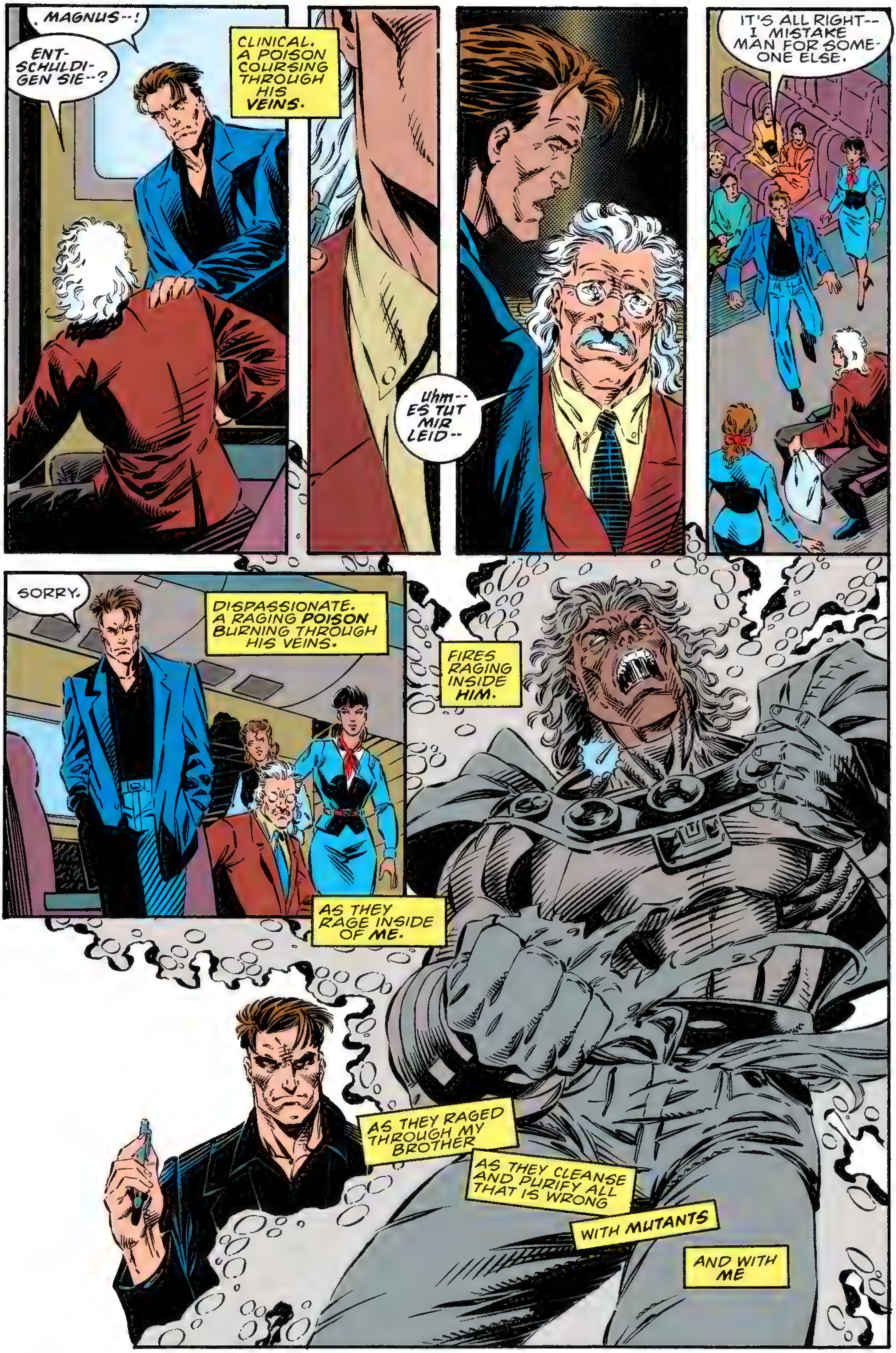
<IT'S JUST SUCH A **CLEANSING** FIRE INSIDE ME, DOCTOR.>
<IT **SIMPLIFIES** THINGS -- IT PROVIDES ME WITH AN IMPETUS, A **CLARITY** OF VISION...>
<THEN WHY CONTINUE TO SEE ME, MISTER **EISKALT** ?!>
DIPLOMA
DIPLOMA
<IT IS BECOMING *QUITE* OBVIOUS THAT YOU DO NOT **WANT** TO MOVE BEYOND THAT WHICH EMOTIONALLY **CRIPPLES** YOU.>
<I COME -- BECAUSE I STILL WANT TO FIND A **BETTER** WAY -- TO SAVE MYSELF...>
<A BETTER WAY THAN **WHAT,** ADRIAN ?>
<*A BETTER WAY THAN WHAT--?*>


EMPIRE STATE UNIVERSITY, MANHATTAN, NEW YORK.
...I WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU TO JOIN ME IN WELCOMING OUR SPECIAL GUEST-LECTURER--
--ISRAEL'S FORMER AMBASSADOR TO GREAT BRITAIN, DOCTOR GABRIELLE HALLER--
CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP
THANK YOU, PROFESSOR FELDER.
QUITE AN INTERESTING APPROACH YOU'VE CHOSEN FOR A CLASS ENTITLED: "PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW," ISN'T IT?
"DEMAGOGUES OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY -- A WEEKLY SEMINAR SERIES"--?
A TOPIC, I'M SAD TO SAY WITH FAR TOO MANY EXAMPLES TO CITE, AS IS EVIDENT FROM YOUR ROSTER OF PREVIOUS GUEST-SPEAKERS.
THE MAN WE ARE HERE TO DISCUSS TODAY IS UNIQUE IN HIS OWN RIGHT, A MAN WE KNOW PRECIOUS LITTLE ABOUT -- WITH THE OFFICIAL RECORD HAVING PRECIOUS LITTLE TO SAY.
WE BELIEVE THE MAN WHO WOULD BECOME MAGNETO WAS BORN ERIK MAGNUS LEHNSHERR, TO A GYPSY FAMILY OF SINTE DESCENT--
--OUTSIDE GDANSK, POLAND, THEN KNOWN AS DANZIG, AROUND 1928.

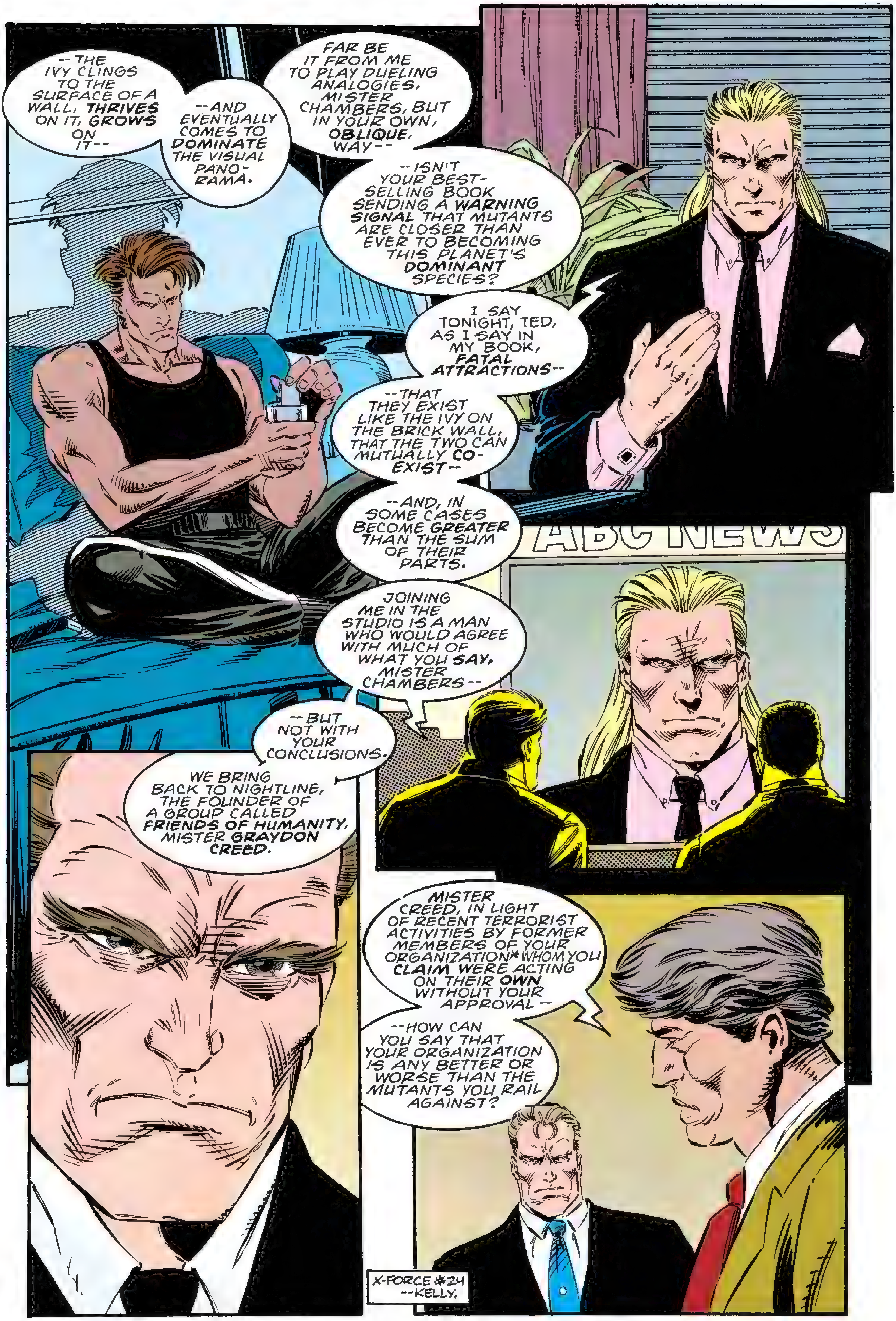

AFTER DANZIG WAS ANNEXED TO **NAZI GERMANY** IN **1939**, THE YOUNG MAN THEN NAMED ERIK--
--ALONG WITH THOUSANDS OF OTHER GYPSIES --WAS SHIFTED TO A WORK CAMP IN THE CITY OF **AUSCHWITZ.**
WE **ALL** KNOW WHAT HAPPENED THEN. IT IS -- OR *SHOULD* BE -- INDELIBLY BRANDED ON OUR COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS.
GENOCIDE. *EXTERMINATION.* NOT ONLY OF THE JEWISH RACE, BUT ALSO OF THE POLES, THE GYPSIES, THE HOMOSEXUALS, THE INTELLECTUALS. ANYONE THE *"MASTER RACE"* FELT WAS DISPOSABLE...
LEHNSHERR LOST HIS ***PARENTS*** AND ***SISTER*** DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT AT ***AUSCHWITZ.***
BUT HE *GAINED* SOMETHING IN THE LIBERATION OF THE CAMP IN 1945, AS WELL. HE GAINED HOPE IN THE FORM OF A *WIFE*, A WOMAN NAMED ***MAGDA.***
IN 1946, THEY TOOK UP RESIDENCE IN THE UKRAINIAN CITY OF ***VINNITSA...***
... WHERE MAGDA, GAVE BIRTH TO A DAUGHTER THEY NAMED ***ANYA.***
BUT LEHNSHERR HAD LEARNED SOMETHING *ELSE* ABOUT HIMSELF IN AUSCHWITZ, SOMETHING WHICH WAS BECOMING MORE APPARENT AND MORE FRIGHTENING TO HIM EVERYDAY --
--HE LEARNED HE WAS A ***MUTANT,*** AND WHEN ANYA WAS TRAGICALLY ***KILLED*** IN AN ARSONIST'S FIRE, LEHNSHERR LASHED OUT AT THE VILLAGERS WHO REFUSED TO HELP SAVE HER --
--AND MAGDA, SEEING WHAT FIRES RAGED BEHIND HER HUSBAND'S ICE COLD EYES, ***FLED***--
--SHE RAN AS ***FAR*** AWAY FROM HIM AS SHE COULD--
-- AND, IN HIS MISERY, IN HIS LONELINESS, HE WENT TO ***ISRAEL***--
--TO SAVE HIS ***OWN*** SOUL, HE CHOSE TO WORK WITH SURVIVORS OF THE CAMPS, AND IN TURN, HELPED THEM REGAIN ***THEIRS.***

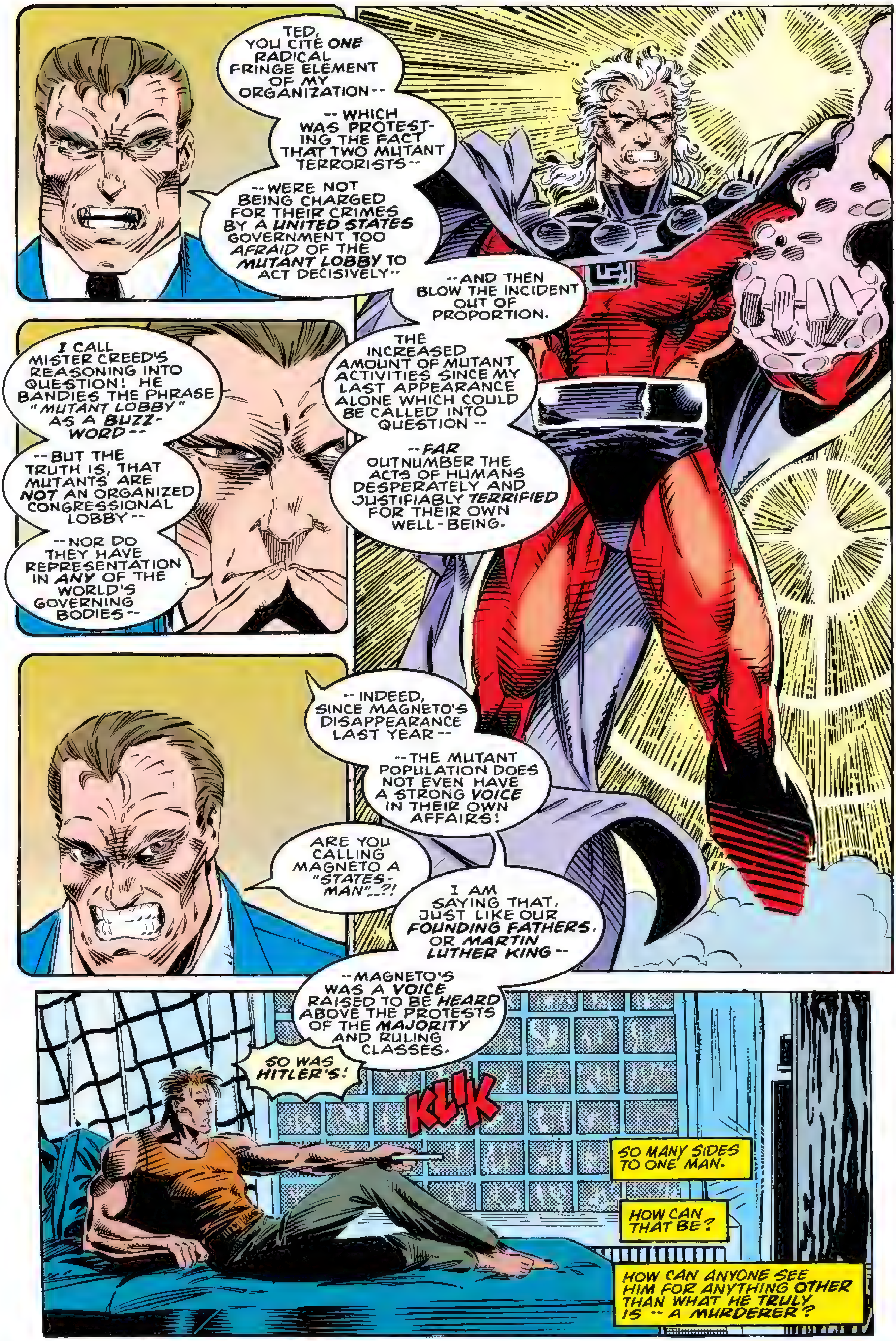

AND THAT IS WHERE I MET HIM, FOR I WAS A PATIENT AT THAT HOSPITAL IN HAIFA.
LEHNSHERR HAD TAKEN TO CALLING HIMSELF MAGNUS...
...AS IF BY CHOOSING HIS MIDDLE NAME, HE COULD BRING SOME SEMBLANCE OF BALANCE AND SIMPLICITY TO HIS HAUNTED LIFE.
MAGNUS HELPED NURSE ME BACK TO HEALTH. DOES THAT MAKE ME AN OBJECTIVE LECTURER, YOU MAY WELL WONDER?
FOR THE MOST PART, I CAN SEPARATE MAGNUS THE MAN FROM MAGNETO THE MUTANT CRUSADER.
AND PLEASE NOTE MY CHOICE OF WORDS, FOR I HAVE VALID REASONS TO LABEL MAGNETO CRUSADER AND NOT DICTATOR.
FIRSTLY: HE HAS NO COUNTRY TO CALL HIS OWN.
SECONDLY: HE HAS FOUGHT FOR A SPECIFIC CAUSE, NOT FOR PERSONAL POWER.
WHICH BEGS THE QUESTION THEN, BEFORE HE DIED IN A BATTLE ABOVE EARTH--
--WAS MAGNETO A DEMAGOGUE OR AN IDEALOGUE?
WAS HE A TYRRANNICAL MADMAN PLACING HIMSELF ABOVE THE RIGHTS OF HUMANITY OR A RIGHTEOUS ZEALOT FIGHTING FOR A NOBLE CAUSE -- EQUALITY FOR MUTANTS?
CAN ANY ONE OF US TRULY ANSWER SUCH A QUESTION?

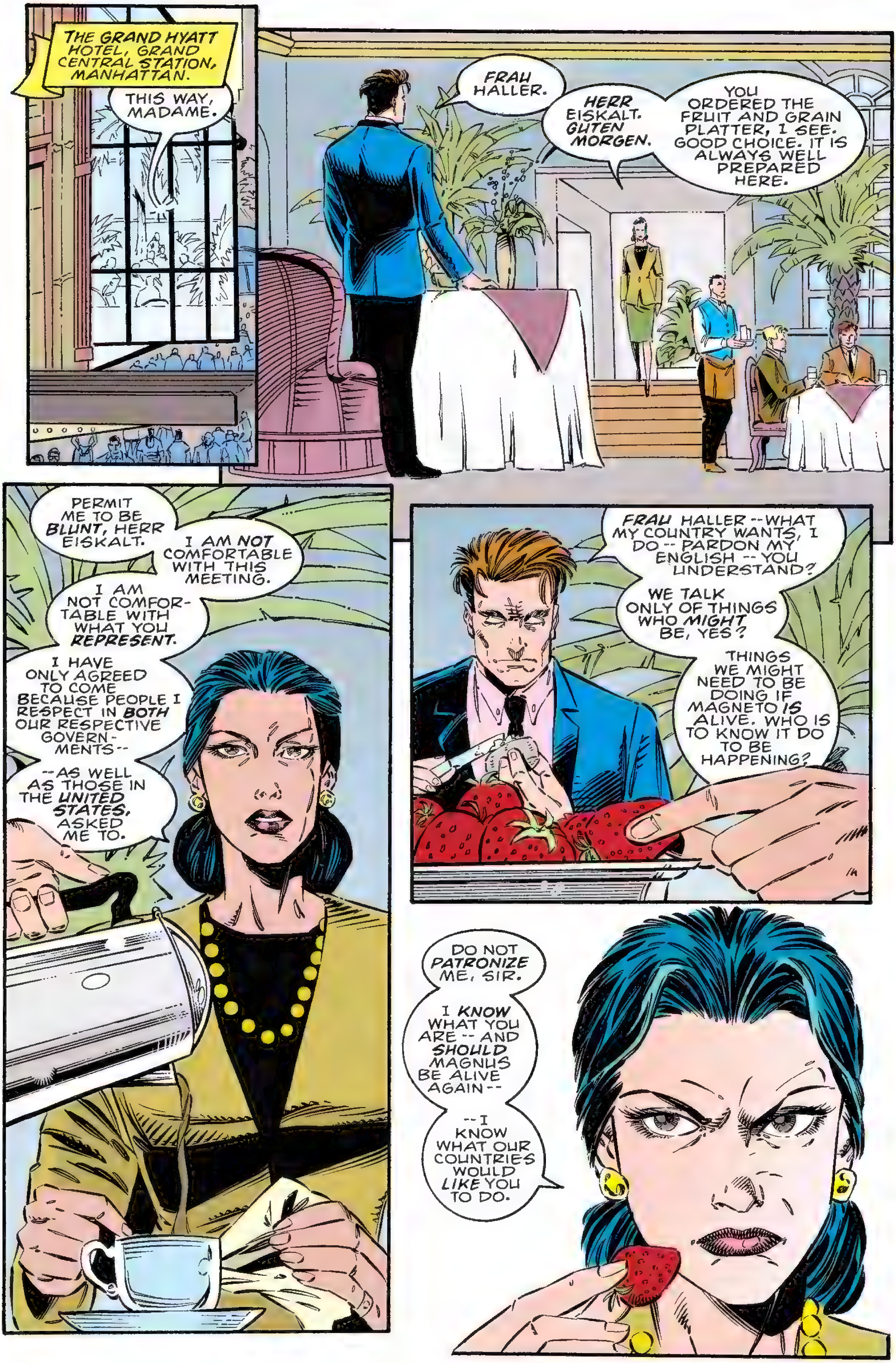

I'VE ALWAYS HATED THE FEELING WHEN THE WHEELS FIRST LEAVE THE GROUND.
YOU GET A PALPABLE SENSE THAT CONTROL OVER YOUR LIFE HAS BEEN PLACED IN THE HANDS OF OTHERS.
IRONIC THOUGH CONSIDERING HOW I HAVE LIVED MY LIFE ON LAND, THAT THIS SHOULD WORRY ME IN THE AIR...
I LEAVE BERLIN IN ORDER TO REGAIN THAT LOST SENSE OF CONTROL.
FATAL ATTRACTION MUTANTS & MEN J.B. CHAME
FATAL ATTRACTIONS MUTANTS & MEN
AND IN NEW YORK LIES THE BEGINNING OF THE END.
EXCUSE ME, SON, MAY I GET BY--?
EITHER FOR MYSELF, OR FOR THE BUTCHER WHO FLAYS MY NIGHTMARES.
THANK YOU, SON.
MAGNUS!
Oh.
PRECISE. ANALYTICAL. CLINICAL. DISPASSIONATE.
BE THE MONSTER HE WAS. KILL HIM AS HE KILLED UTE.
PRECISE. A NEEDLE CONCEALED IN A PEN.
ANALYTICAL. A NEEDLE TIPPED WITH POISON.

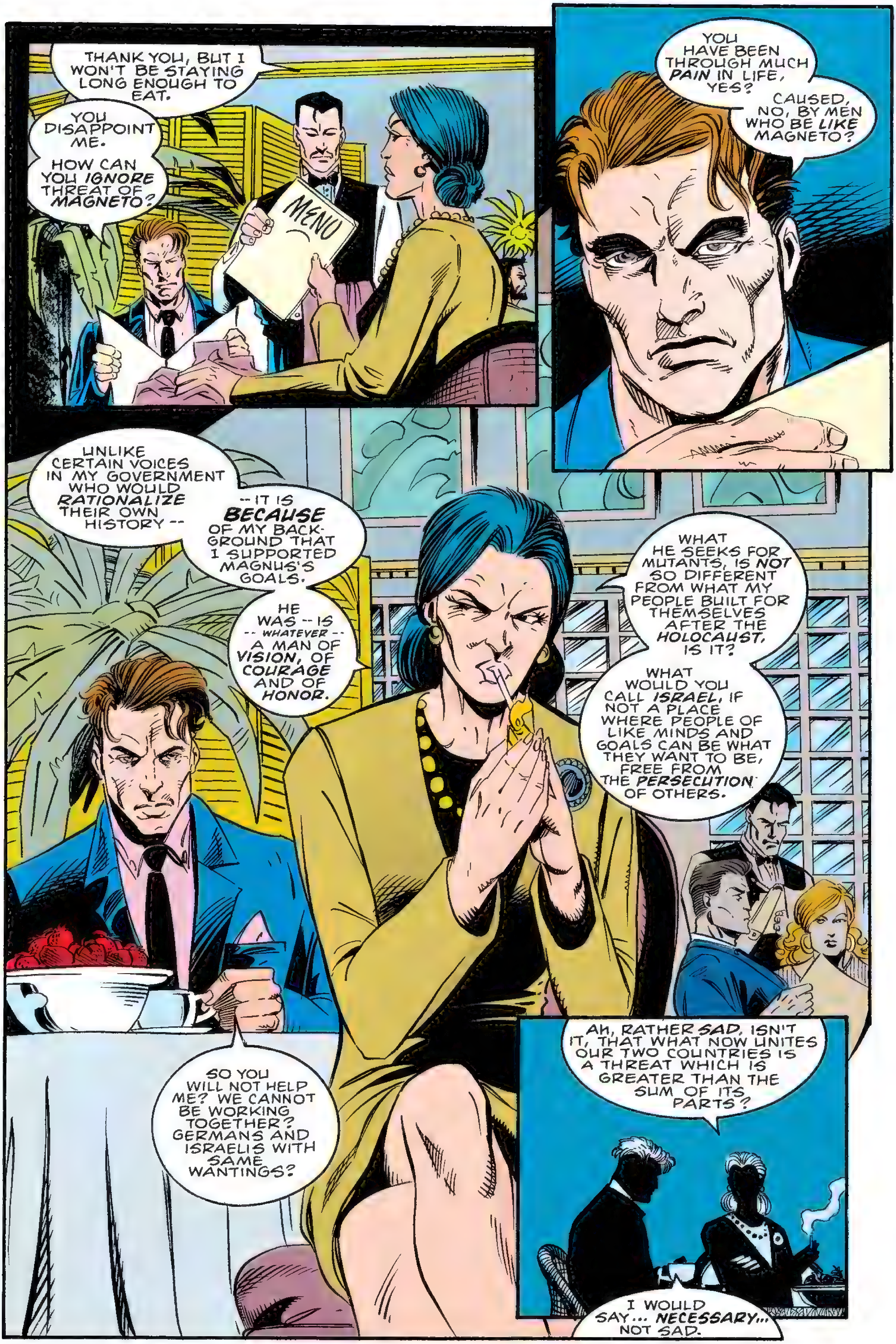

MAGNUS--!
ENT-SCHULDIGEN SIE--?
CLINICAL. A POISON COURSING THROUGH HIS VEINS.
Uhm-- ES TUT MIR LEID--
IT'S ALL RIGHT-- I MISTAKE MAN FOR SOMEONE ELSE.
SORRY.
DISPASSIONATE. A RAGING POISON BURNING THROUGH HIS VEINS.
FIRES RAGING INSIDE HIM.
AS THEY RAGE INSIDE OF ME.
AS THEY RAGED THROUGH MY BROTHER
AS THEY CLEANSE AND PURIFY ALL THAT IS WRONG
WITH MUTANTS
AND WITH ME

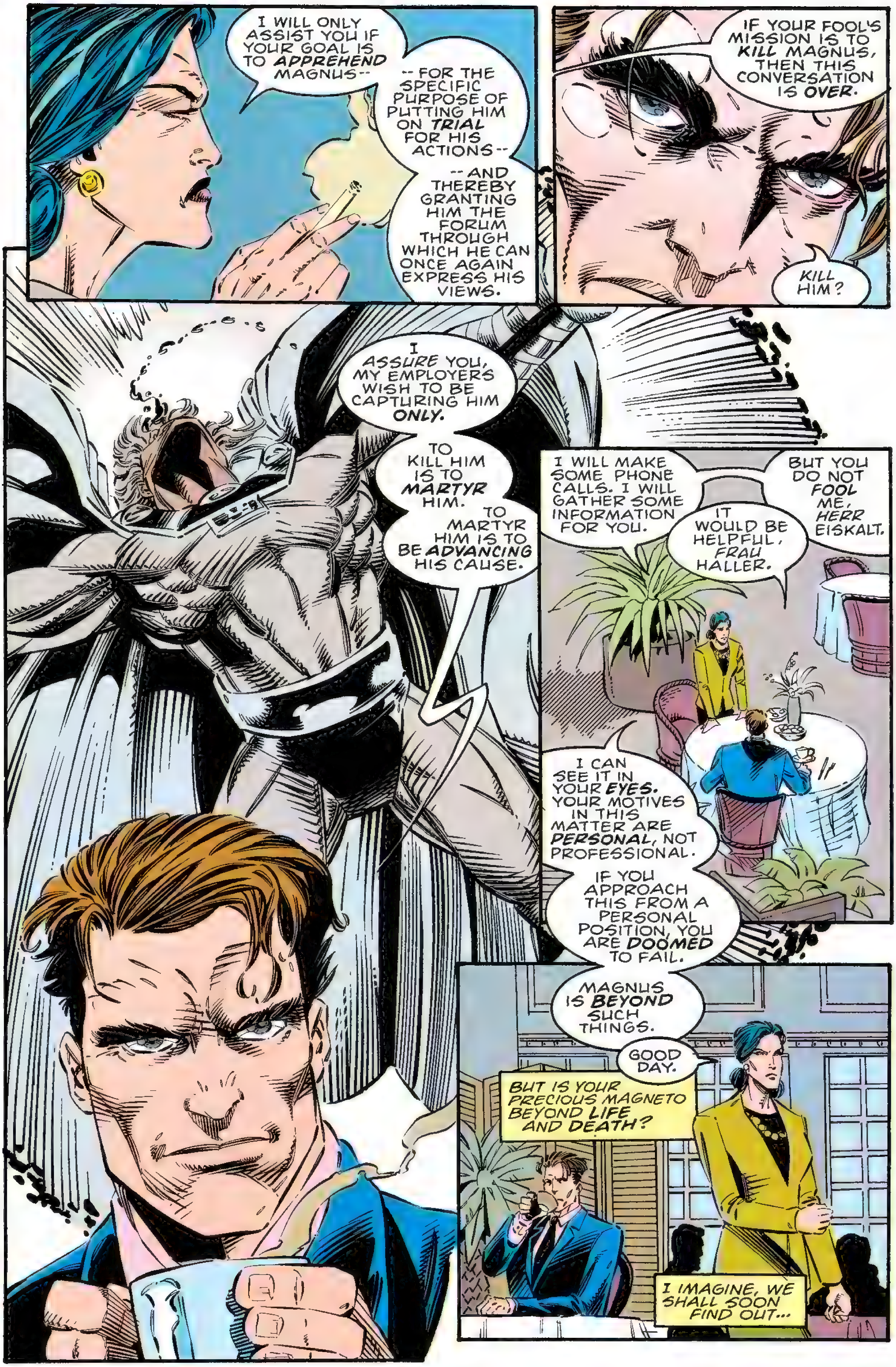
MANHATTAN. TWO DAYS LATER.
THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT I AM CLAIMING, MISTER KOPPEL.
AS I STATED QUITE THOROUGHLY IN MY NEW BOOK, MANKIND MUST ULTIMATELY BEAR THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PROLIFERATION OF THE MUTANT GENE THROUGHOUT THE PLANET.
OVER THE LAST SEVERAL DECADES, WE HAVE INTRODUCED SO MANY CONTAGIONS INTO THE ENVIRONMENT--
--WHICH HAVE SIMPLY MADE THEIR INEVITABLE WAY INTO THE HUMAN DNA STRUCTURE, THEREBY RESULTING IN MORE MUTANT OFFSPRING.
HOW CAN WE BLAME MUTANTS FOR THIS? IT IS ANALAGOUS TO BLAMING THE GRASS WHEN A WEED TAKES ROOT.
SO YOU COMPARE MUTANTS TO WEEDS THEN, MISTER CHAMBERS?
LIKE IVY GROWING OUT OF CONTROL ON A BRICK WALL?
YOUR ANALOGY ATTEMPTS TO PORTRAY MY ANALOGY AS SOMETHING -- UGLY -- MISTER KOPPEL.
I MERELY COMPARE THEM FROM A VISUAL STANDPOINT--

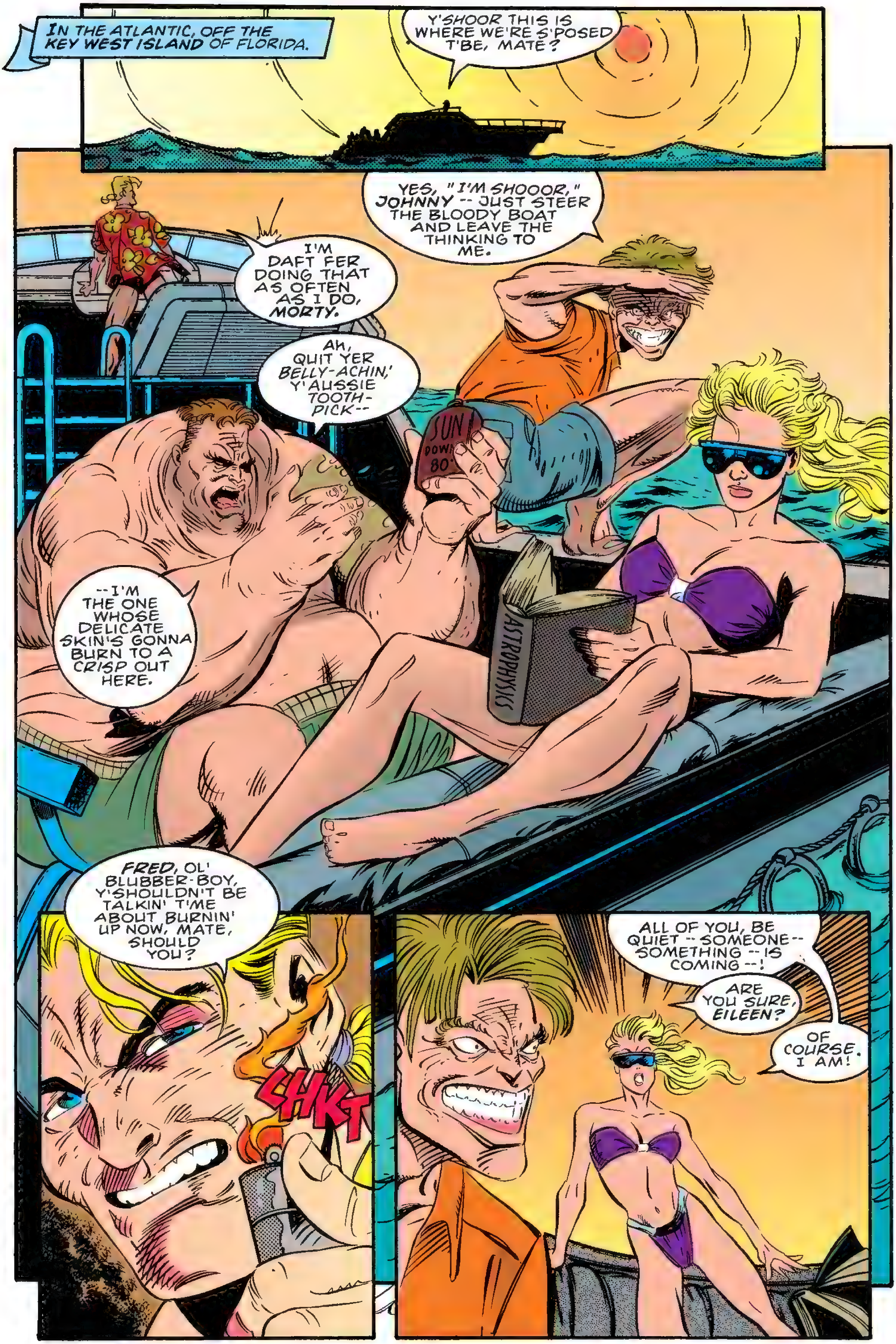

--THE IVY CLINGS TO THE SURFACE OF A WALL, **THRIVES** ON IT, **GROWS** ON IT--
--AND EVENTUALLY COMES TO **DOMINATE** THE VISUAL PANORAMA.
FAR BE IT FROM ME TO PLAY DUELING ANALOGIES, MISTER CHAMBERS, BUT IN YOUR OWN, **OBLIQUE**, WAY--
--ISN'T YOUR BEST-SELLING BOOK SENDING A **WARNING SIGNAL** THAT MUTANTS ARE CLOSER THAN EVER TO BECOMING THIS PLANET'S **DOMINANT** SPECIES?
I SAY TONIGHT, TED, AS I SAY IN MY BOOK, **FATAL ATTRACTIONS**--
--THAT THEY EXIST LIKE THE IVY ON THE BRICK WALL, THAT THE TWO CAN MUTUALLY **CO-EXIST**--
--AND, IN SOME CASES BECOME **GREATER** THAN THE SUM OF THEIR PARTS.
ABC NEWS
JOINING **ME IN THE** STUDIO IS A MAN WHO WOULD AGREE WITH MUCH OF WHAT YOU **SAY,** MISTER CHAMBERS--
--BUT NOT WITH YOUR CONCLUSIONS.
WE BRING BACK TO NIGHTLINE, THE FOUNDER OF A GROUP CALLED **FRIENDS OF HUMANITY,** MISTER **GRAYDON CREED.**
MISTER CREED, IN LIGHT OF RECENT TERRORIST ACTIVITIES BY FORMER MEMBERS OF YOUR ORGANIZATION* WHOM YOU **CLAIM** WERE ACTING ON THEIR **OWN** WITHOUT YOUR APPROVAL--
--HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT YOUR ORGANIZATION IS ANY BETTER OR WORSE THAN THE MUTANTS YOU RAIL AGAINST?
X-FORCE #24 --KELLY.

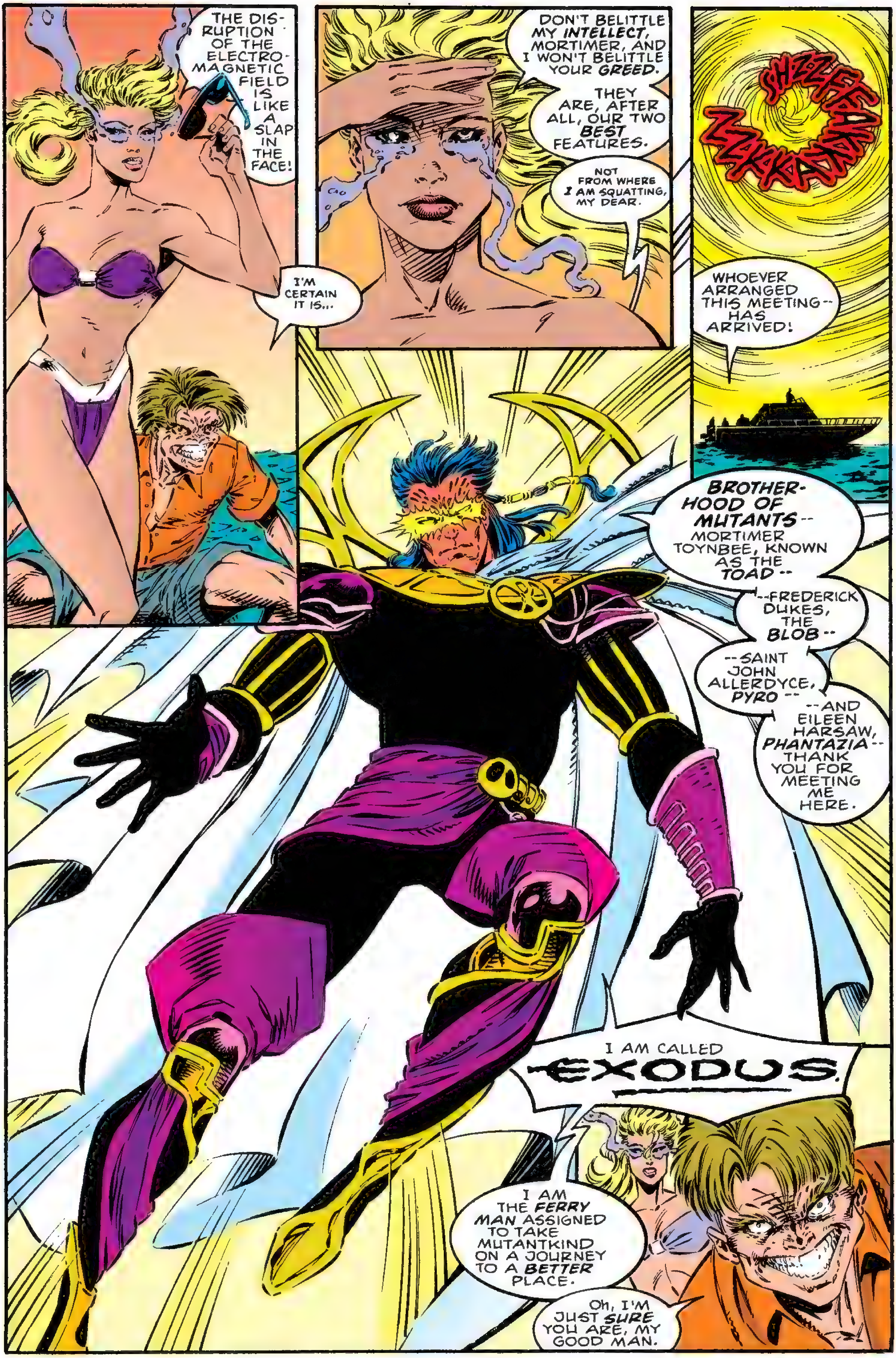

TED, YOU CITE *ONE* RADICAL FRINGE ELEMENT OF MY ORGANIZATION--
-- WHICH WAS PROTESTING THE FACT THAT TWO MUTANT TERRORISTS--
--WERE NOT BEING CHARGED FOR THEIR CRIMES BY A *UNITED STATES* GOVERNMENT TOO *AFRAID* OF THE *MUTANT LOBBY* TO ACT DECISIVELY--
--AND THEN BLOW THE INCIDENT OUT OF PROPORTION.
THE INCREASED AMOUNT OF MUTANT ACTIVITIES SINCE MY LAST APPEARANCE ALONE WHICH COULD BE CALLED INTO QUESTION --
--*FAR* OUTNUMBER THE ACTS OF HUMANS DESPERATELY AND JUSTIFIABLY *TERRIFIED* FOR THEIR OWN WELL-BEING.
I CALL MISTER CREED'S REASONING INTO QUESTION! HE BANDIES THE PHRASE *"MUTANT LOBBY"* AS A *BUZZ-WORD*--
--BUT THE TRUTH IS, THAT MUTANTS ARE *NOT* AN ORGANIZED CONGRESSIONAL LOBBY--
--NOR DO THEY HAVE REPRESENTATION IN *ANY* OF THE WORLD'S GOVERNING BODIES--
--INDEED, SINCE MAGNETO'S DISAPPEARANCE LAST YEAR--
--THE MUTANT POPULATION DOES NOT EVEN HAVE A STRONG *VOICE* IN THEIR OWN AFFAIRS!
ARE YOU CALLING MAGNETO A *"STATES-MAN"*--?!
I AM SAYING THAT, JUST LIKE OUR *FOUNDING FATHERS*, OR *MARTIN LUTHER KING*--
--MAGNETO'S WAS A *VOICE* RAISED TO BE *HEARD* ABOVE THE PROTESTS OF THE *MAJORITY* AND RULING CLASSES.
SO WAS HITLER'S!
KLIK
SO MANY SIDES TO ONE MAN.
HOW CAN THAT BE?
HOW CAN ANYONE SEE HIM FOR ANYTHING OTHER THAN WHAT HE TRULY IS -- A MURDERER?

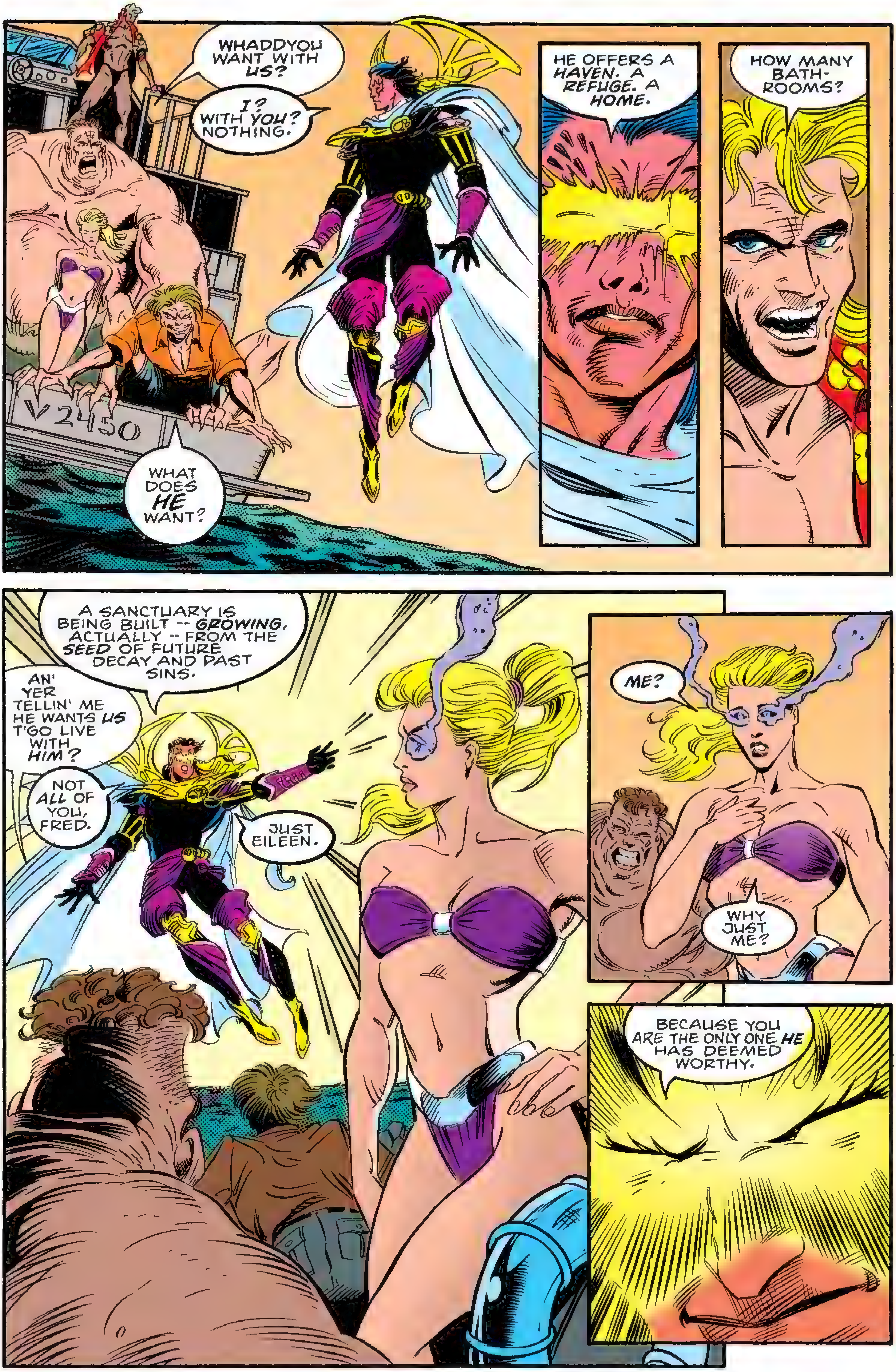

THE GRAND HYATT HOTEL, GRAND CENTRAL STATION, MANHATTAN.
THIS WAY, MADAME.
FRAU HALLER.
HERR EISKALT. GUTEN MORGEN.
YOU ORDERED THE FRUIT AND GRAIN PLATTER, I SEE. GOOD CHOICE. IT IS ALWAYS WELL PREPARED HERE.
PERMIT ME TO BE BLUNT, HERR EISKALT.
I AM NOT COMFORTABLE WITH THIS MEETING.
I AM NOT COMFORTABLE WITH WHAT YOU REPRESENT.
I HAVE ONLY AGREED TO COME BECAUSE PEOPLE I RESPECT IN BOTH OUR RESPECTIVE GOVERNMENTS--
--AS WELL AS THOSE IN THE UNITED STATES, ASKED ME TO.
FRAU HALLER--WHAT MY COUNTRY WANTS, I DO--PARDON MY ENGLISH--YOU UNDERSTAND?
WE TALK ONLY OF THINGS WHO MIGHT BE, YES?
THINGS WE MIGHT NEED TO BE DOING IF MAGNETO IS ALIVE. WHO IS TO KNOW IT DO TO BE HAPPENING?
DO NOT PATRONIZE ME, SIR.
I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE--AND SHOULD MAGNUS BE ALIVE AGAIN--
--I KNOW WHAT OUR COUNTRIES WOULD LIKE YOU TO DO.

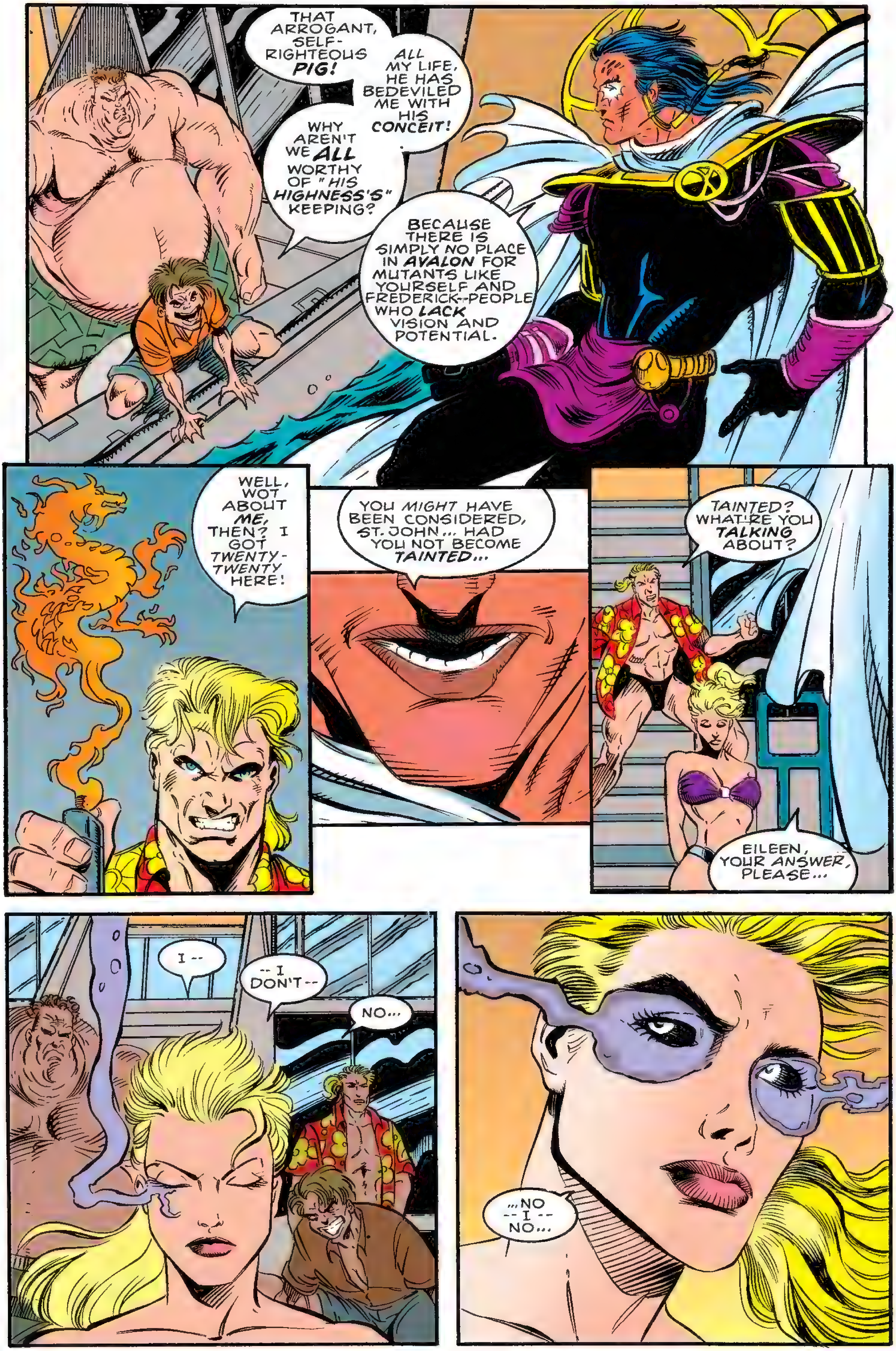

THANK YOU, BUT I WON'T BE STAYING LONG ENOUGH TO EAT.
YOU DISAPPOINT ME.
HOW CAN YOU *IGNORE* THREAT OF *MAGNETO*?
MENU
YOU HAVE BEEN THROUGH MUCH *PAIN* IN LIFE, YES?
CAUSED, NO, BY MEN WHO BE *LIKE* MAGNETO?
UNLIKE CERTAIN VOICES IN MY GOVERNMENT WHO WOULD *RATIONALIZE* THEIR OWN HISTORY --
-- IT IS ***BECAUSE*** OF MY BACKGROUND THAT I SUPPORTED MAGNUS'S GOALS.
HE WAS -- IS -- *WHATEVER* -- A MAN OF *VISION*, OF *COURAGE* AND OF *HONOR*.
WHAT HE SEEKS FOR MUTANTS, IS *NOT* SO DIFFERENT FROM WHAT MY PEOPLE BUILT FOR THEMSELVES AFTER THE *HOLOCAUST*, IS IT?
WHAT WOULD YOU CALL *ISRAEL*, IF NOT A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE OF LIKE MINDS AND GOALS CAN BE WHAT THEY WANT TO BE, FREE FROM THE *PERSECUTION* OF OTHERS.
SO YOU WILL NOT HELP ME? WE CANNOT BE WORKING TOGETHER? GERMANS AND ISRAELIS WITH SAME WANTINGS?
AH, RATHER *SAD*, ISN'T IT, THAT WHAT NOW UNITES OUR TWO COUNTRIES IS A THREAT WHICH IS GREATER THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS?
I WOULD SAY... *NECESSARY*... NOT SAD.

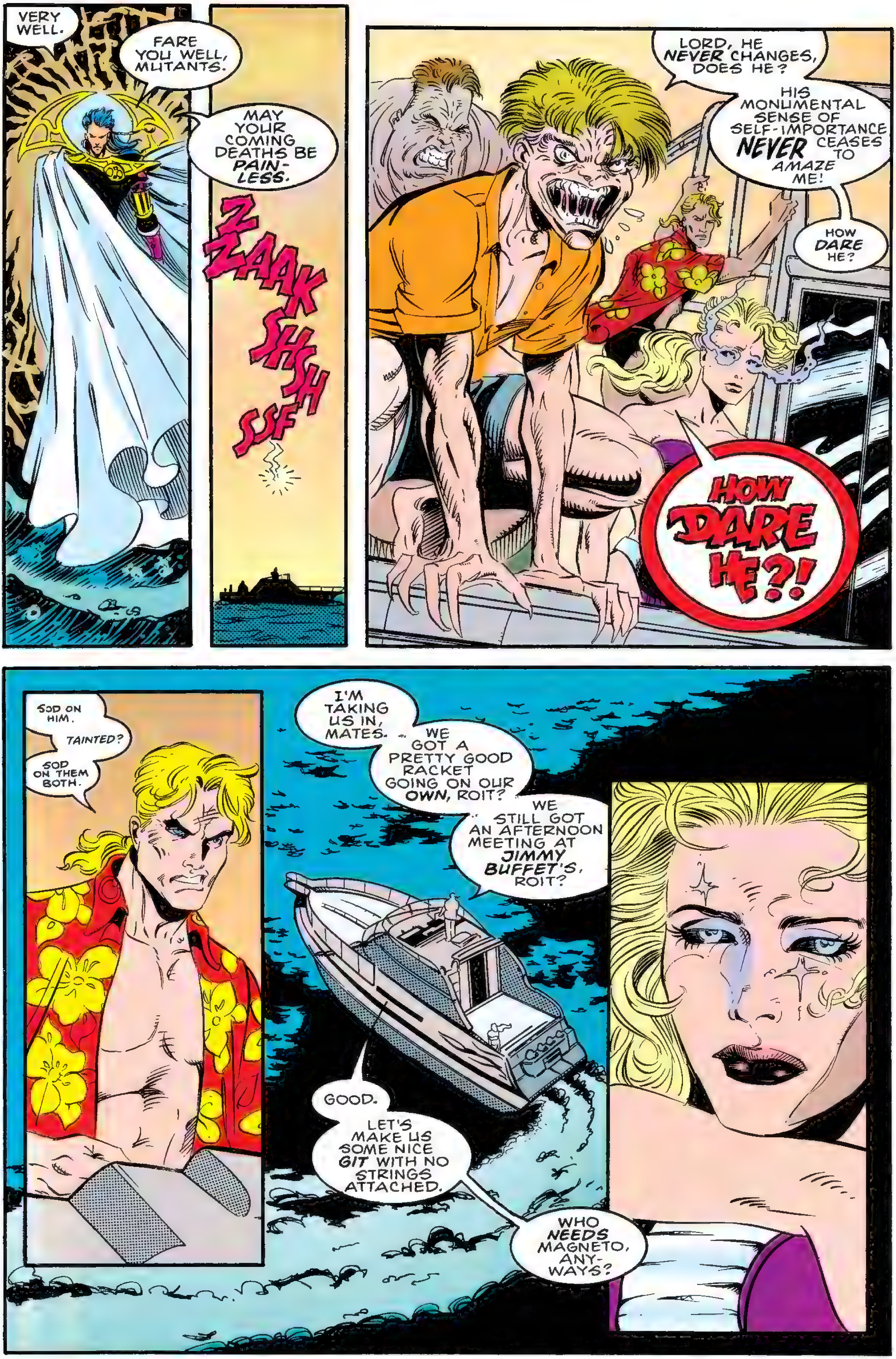

I WILL ONLY ASSIST YOU IF YOUR GOAL IS TO *APPREHEND* MAGNUS--
-- FOR THE SPECIFIC PURPOSE OF PUTTING HIM ON *TRIAL* FOR HIS ACTIONS--
-- AND THEREBY GRANTING HIM THE FORUM THROUGH WHICH HE CAN ONCE AGAIN EXPRESS HIS VIEWS.
IF YOUR FOOL'S MISSION IS TO *KILL* MAGNUS, THEN THIS CONVERSATION IS *OVER*.
KILL HIM?
I *ASSURE* YOU, MY EMPLOYERS WISH TO BE CAPTURING HIM *ONLY*.
TO KILL HIM IS TO *MARTYR* HIM.
TO MARTYR HIM IS TO BE *ADVANCING* HIS CAUSE.
I WILL MAKE SOME PHONE CALLS. I WILL GATHER SOME INFORMATION FOR YOU.
BUT YOU DO NOT *FOOL* ME, *HERR* EISKALT.
IT WOULD BE HELPFUL, *FRAU* HALLER.
I CAN SEE IT IN YOUR *EYES*. YOUR MOTIVES IN THIS MATTER ARE *PERSONAL*, NOT PROFESSIONAL.
IF YOU APPROACH THIS FROM A PERSONAL POSITION, YOU ARE *DOOMED* TO FAIL.
MAGNUS IS *BEYOND* SUCH THINGS.
GOOD DAY.
BUT IS YOUR PRECIOUS MAGNETO BEYOND LIFE *AND* DEATH?
I IMAGINE, WE SHALL SOON FIND OUT...

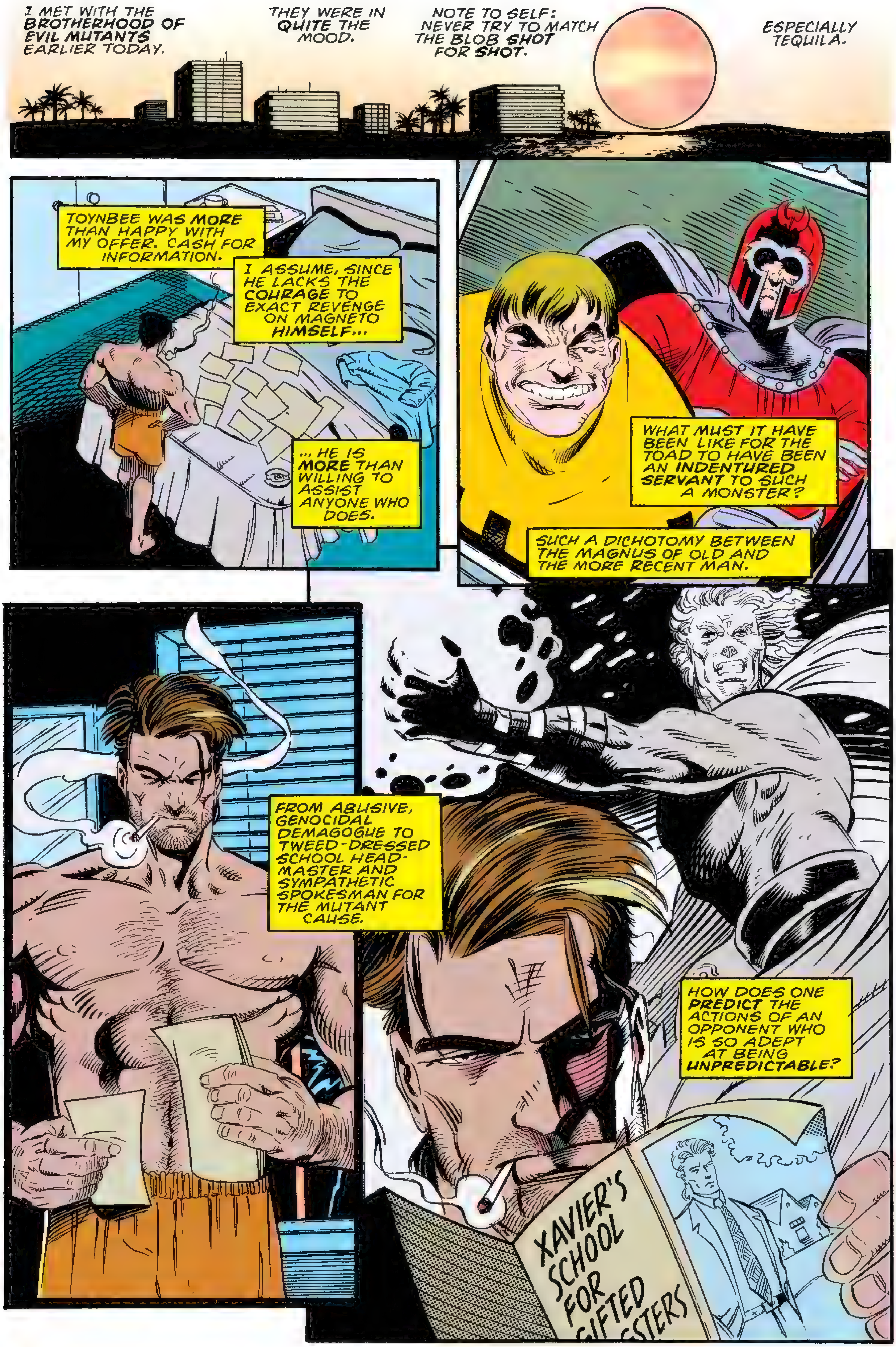

IN THE ATLANTIC, OFF THE KEY WEST ISLAND OF FLORIDA.
Y'SHOOR THIS IS WHERE WE'RE S'POSED T'BE, MATE?
YES, "I'M SHOOOR," JOHNNY -- JUST STEER THE BLOODY BOAT AND LEAVE THE THINKING TO ME.
I'M DAFT FER DOING THAT AS OFTEN AS I DO, MORTY.
AH, QUIT YER BELLY-ACHIN,' Y'AUSSIE TOOTH-PICK--
--I'M THE ONE WHOSE DELICATE SKIN'S GONNA BURN TO A CRISP OUT HERE.
SUN DOWN 80
ASTROPHYSICS
FRED, OL' BLUBBER-BOY, Y'SHOULDN'T BE TALKIN' T'ME ABOUT BURNIN' UP NOW, MATE, SHOULD YOU?
CHKT
ALL OF YOU, BE QUIET -- SOMEONE -- SOMETHING -- IS COMING --!
ARE YOU SURE, EILEEN?
OF COURSE. I AM!

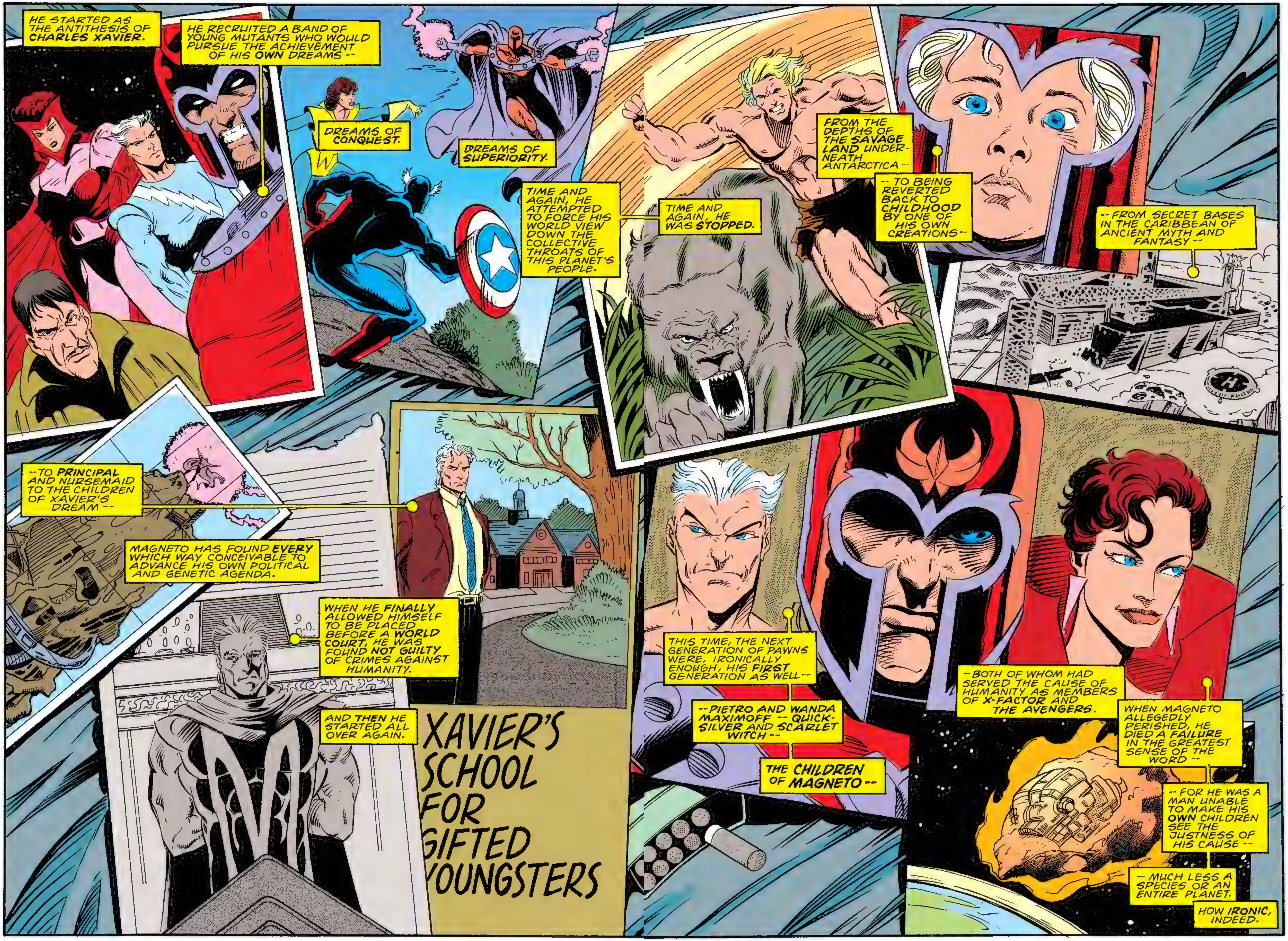

THE DISRUPTION OF THE ELECTROMAGNETIC FIELD IS LIKE A SLAP IN THE FACE!
I'M CERTAIN IT IS...
DON'T BELITTLE MY **INTELLECT**, MORTIMER, AND I WON'T BELITTLE YOUR **GREED**.
THEY ARE, AFTER ALL, OUR TWO **BEST** FEATURES.
NOT FROM WHERE **I** AM SQUATTING, MY DEAR.
SHZZZKFFFKAKAKAKAKZZZ
WHOEVER ARRANGED THIS MEETING-- HAS ARRIVED!
BROTHERHOOD OF MUTANTS-- MORTIMER TOYNBEE, KNOWN AS THE **TOAD**--
--FREDERICK DUKES, THE **BLOB**--
--SAINT JOHN ALLERDYCE, **PYRO**--
--AND EILEEN HARSAW, **PHANTAZIA**-- THANK YOU FOR MEETING ME HERE.
I AM CALLED **EXODUS**.
I AM THE **FERRY MAN** ASSIGNED TO TAKE MUTANTKIND ON A JOURNEY TO A **BETTER** PLACE.
OH, I'M JUST **SURE** YOU ARE, MY GOOD MAN.

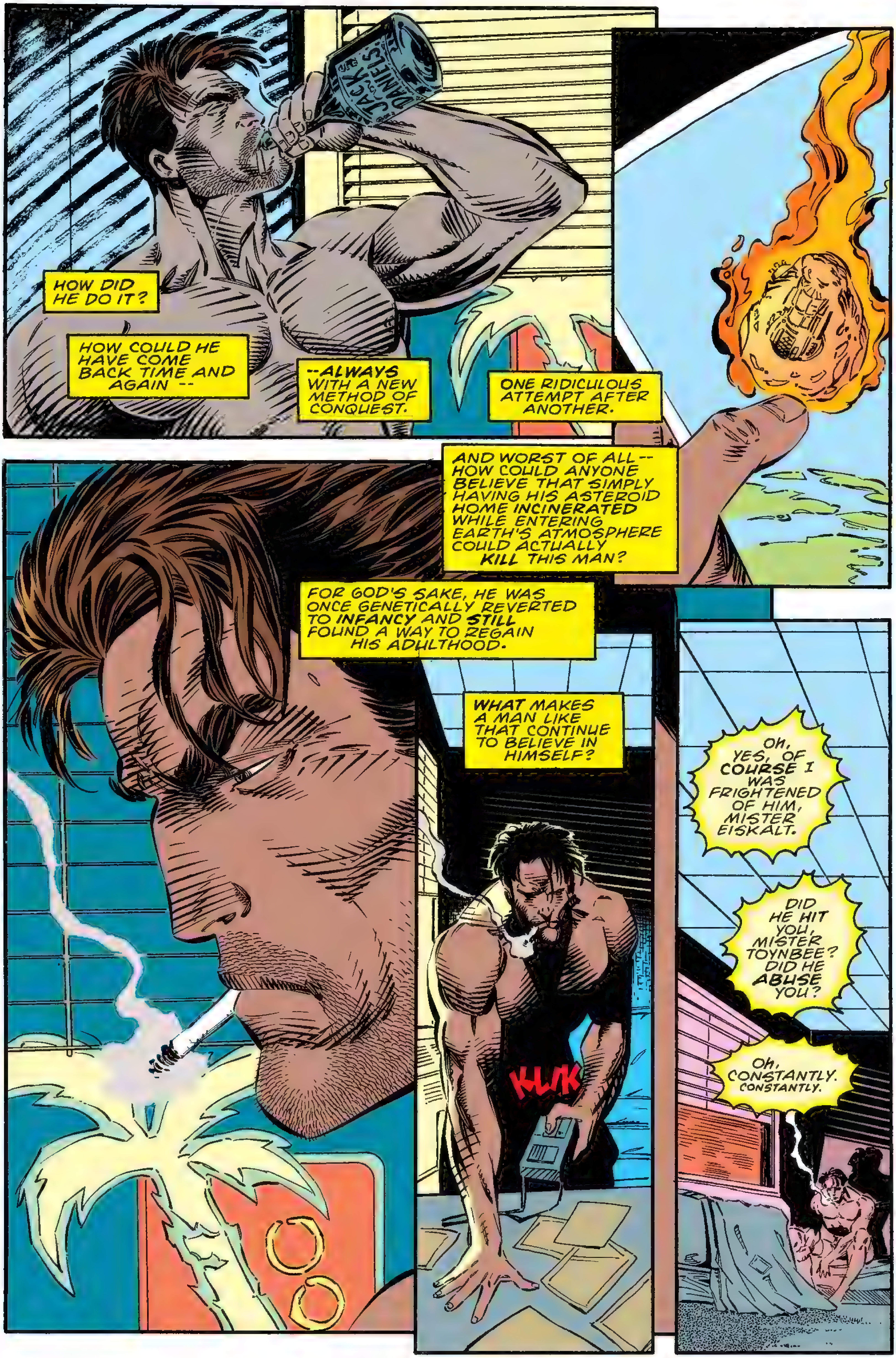

WHADDYOU WANT WITH US?
I? WITH YOU? NOTHING.
V2450
WHAT DOES HE WANT?
HE OFFERS A HAVEN. A REFUGE. A HOME.
HOW MANY BATH-ROOMS?
A SANCTUARY IS BEING BUILT -- GROWING, ACTUALLY -- FROM THE SEED OF FUTURE DECAY AND PAST SINS.
AN' YER TELLIN' ME HE WANTS US T'GO LIVE WITH HIM?
NOT ALL OF YOU, FRED.
JUST EILEEN.
ME?
WHY JUST ME?
BECAUSE YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE HE HAS DEEMED WORTHY.

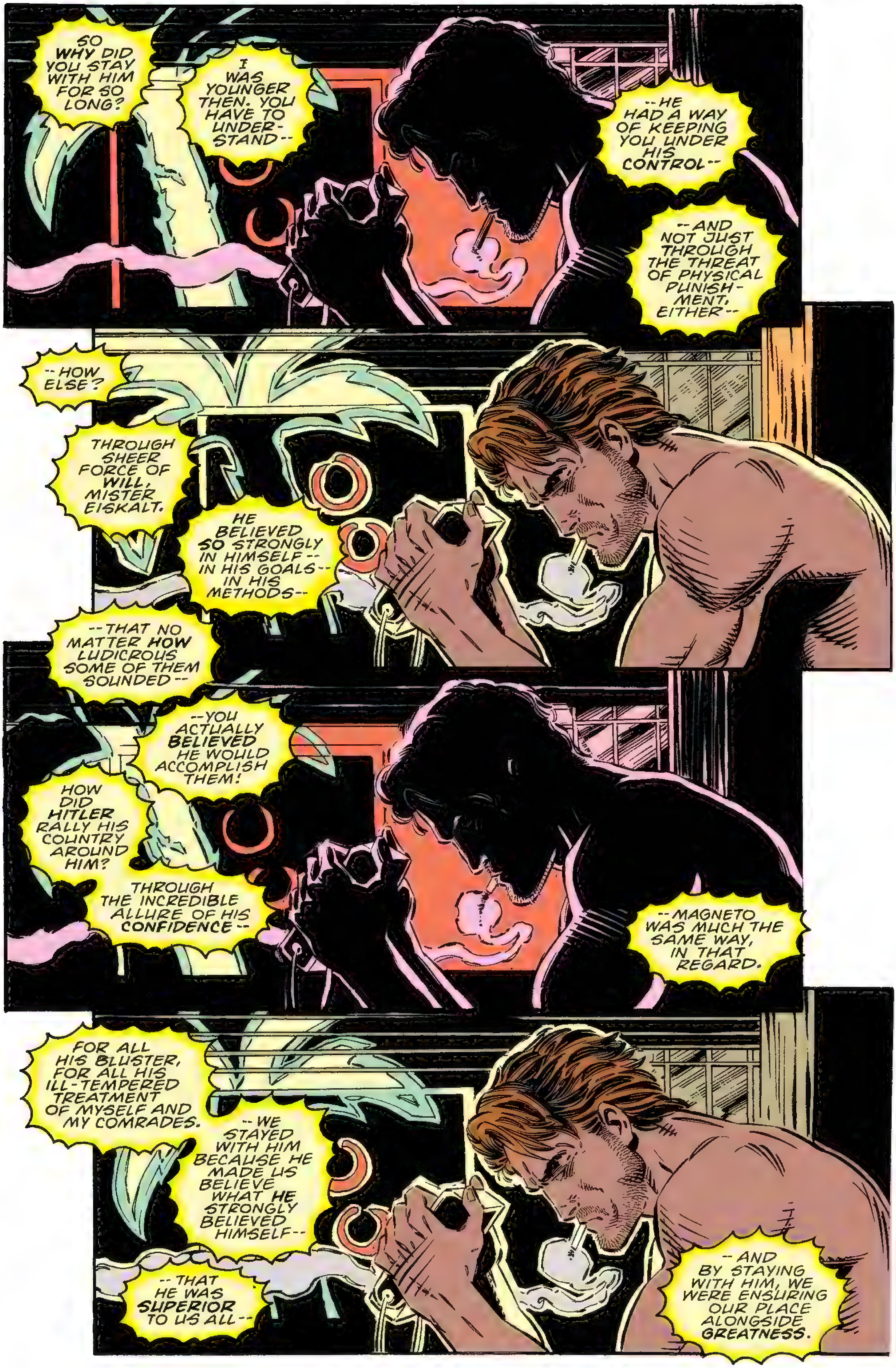

THAT ARROGANT, SELF-RIGHTEOUS PIG!
ALL MY LIFE, HE HAS BEDEVILED ME WITH HIS CONCEIT!
WHY AREN'T WE ALL WORTHY OF "HIS HIGHNESS'S" KEEPING?
BECAUSE THERE IS SIMPLY NO PLACE IN AVALON FOR MUTANTS LIKE YOURSELF AND FREDERICK--PEOPLE WHO LACK VISION AND POTENTIAL.
WELL, WOT ABOUT ME, THEN? I GOT TWENTY-TWENTY HERE!
YOU MIGHT HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED, ST. JOHN... HAD YOU NOT BECOME TAINTED...
TAINTED? WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
EILEEN, YOUR ANSWER, PLEASE...
I --
-- I DON'T --
NO...
...NO -- I -- NO...


VERY WELL.
FARE YOU WELL, MUTANTS.
MAY YOUR COMING DEATHS BE **PAINLESS.**
ZZAAAK SHSHSH SSF
LORD, HE **NEVER** CHANGES, DOES HE?
HIS MONUMENTAL SENSE OF SELF-IMPORTANCE **NEVER** CEASES TO AMAZE ME!
HOW **DARE** HE?
HOW DARE HE?!
SOD ON HIM.
TAINTED?
SOD ON THEM BOTH.
I'M TAKING US IN, MATES.
WE GOT A PRETTY GOOD RACKET GOING ON OUR **OWN,** ROIT?
WE STILL GOT AN AFTERNOON MEETING AT **JIMMY BUFFET'S,** ROIT?
GOOD.
LET'S MAKE US SOME NICE **GIT** WITH NO STRINGS ATTACHED.
WHO **NEEDS** MAGNETO, ANYWAYS?

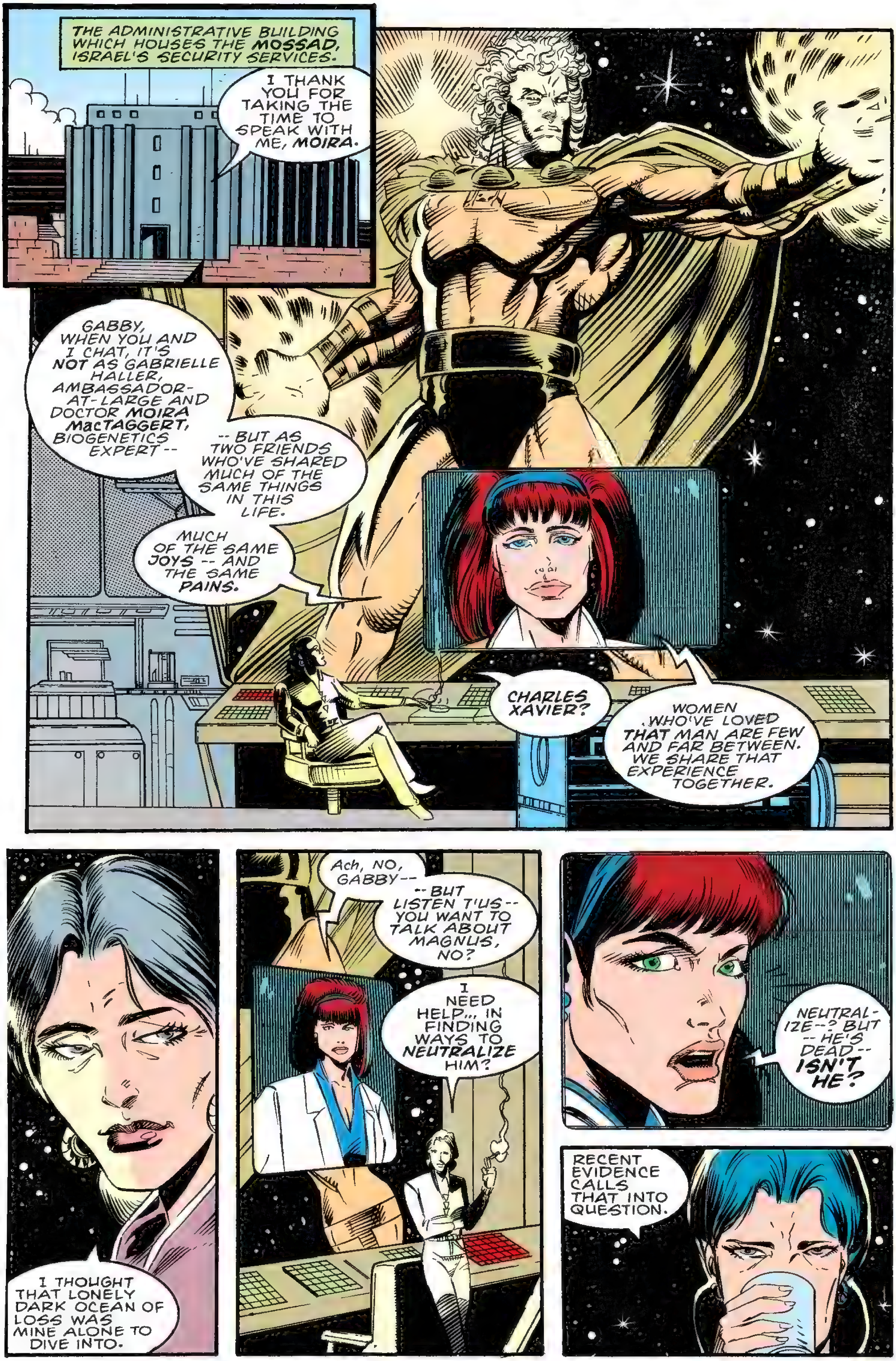

I MET WITH THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS EARLIER TODAY.
THEY WERE IN QUITE THE MOOD.
NOTE TO SELF: NEVER TRY TO MATCH THE BLOB SHOT FOR SHOT.
ESPECIALLY TEQUILA.
TOYNBEE WAS MORE THAN HAPPY WITH MY OFFER. CASH FOR INFORMATION.
I ASSUME, SINCE HE LACKS THE COURAGE TO EXACT REVENGE ON MAGNETO HIMSELF...
...HE IS MORE THAN WILLING TO ASSIST ANYONE WHO DOES.
WHAT MUST IT HAVE BEEN LIKE FOR THE TOAD TO HAVE BEEN AN INDENTURED SERVANT TO SUCH A MONSTER?
SUCH A DICHOTOMY BETWEEN THE MAGNUS OF OLD AND THE MORE RECENT MAN.
FROM ABUSIVE, GENOCIDAL DEMAGOGUE TO TWEED-DRESSED SCHOOL HEADMASTER AND SYMPATHETIC SPOKESMAN FOR THE MUTANT CAUSE.
HOW DOES ONE PREDICT THE ACTIONS OF AN OPPONENT WHO IS SO ADEPT AT BEING UNPREDICTABLE?
XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED

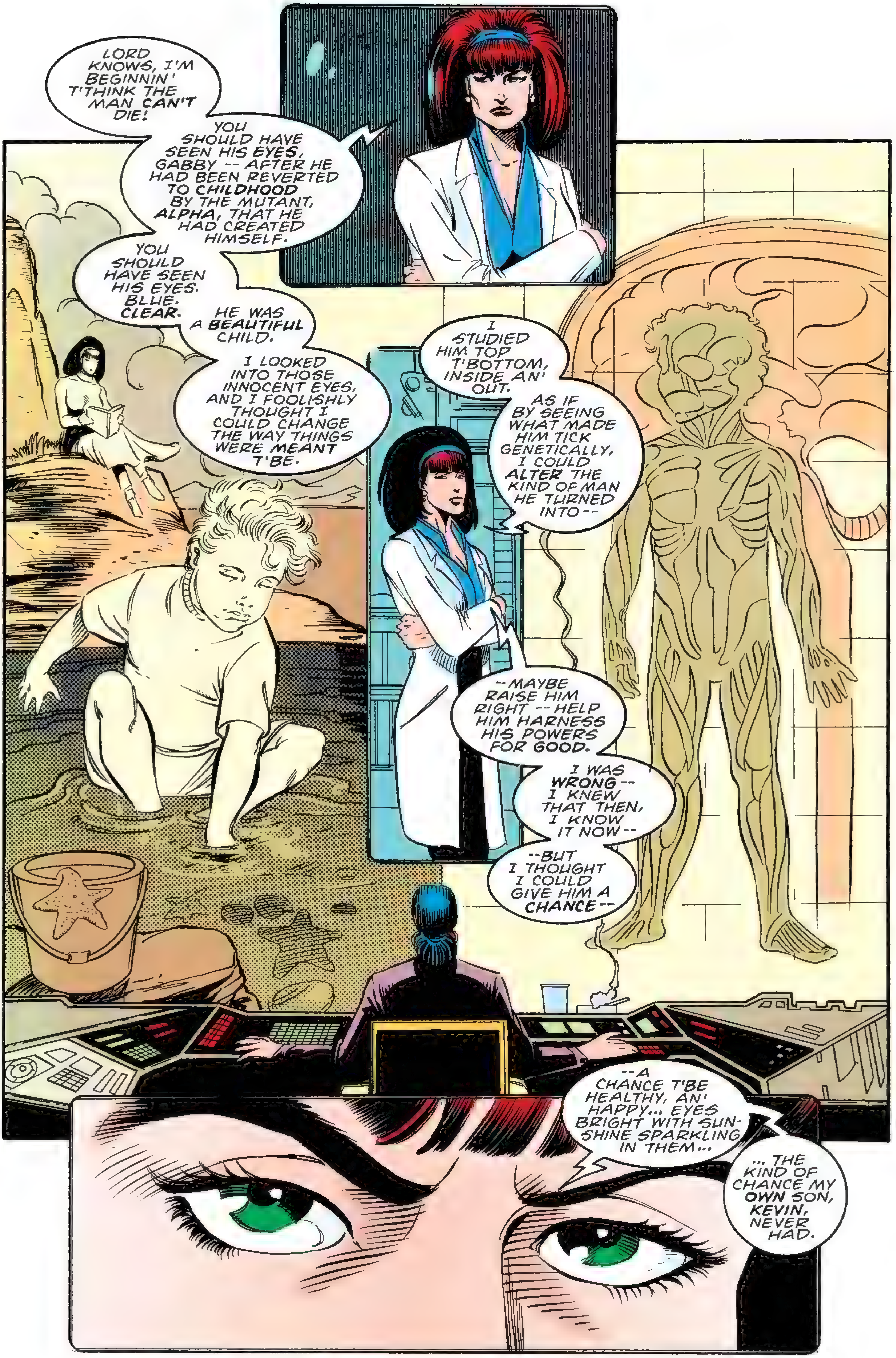

HE STARTED AS THE ANTITHESIS OF CHARLES XAVIER.
HE RECRUITED A BAND OF YOUNG MUTANTS WHO WOULD PURSUE THE ACHIEVEMENT OF HIS OWN DREAMS --
DREAMS OF CONQUEST.
DREAMS OF SUPERIORITY.
TIME AND AGAIN, HE ATTEMPTED TO FORCE HIS WORLD VIEW DOWN THE COLLECTIVE THROATS OF THIS PLANET'S PEOPLE.
TIME AND AGAIN, HE WAS STOPPED.
FROM THE DEPTHS OF THE SAVAGE LAND UNDERNEATH ANTARCTICA --
-- TO BEING REVERTED BACK TO CHILDHOOD BY ONE OF HIS OWN CREATIONS --
-- FROM SECRET BASES IN THE CARIBBEAN OF ANCIENT MYTH AND FANTASY --
--TO PRINCIPAL AND NURSEMAID TO THE CHILDREN OF XAVIER'S DREAM --
MAGNETO HAS FOUND EVERY WHICH WAY CONCEIVABLE TO ADVANCE HIS OWN POLITICAL AND GENETIC AGENDA.
WHEN HE FINALLY ALLOWED HIMSELF TO BE PLACED BEFORE A WORLD COURT, HE WAS FOUND NOT GUILTY OF CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY.
AND THEN HE STARTED ALL OVER AGAIN.
XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS
THIS TIME, THE NEXT GENERATION OF PAWNS WERE, IRONICALLY ENOUGH, HIS FIRST GENERATION AS WELL --
--PIETRO AND WANDA MAXIMOFF -- QUICKSILVER AND SCARLET WITCH --
THE CHILDREN OF MAGNETO --
--BOTH OF WHOM HAD SERVED THE CAUSE OF HUMANITY AS MEMBERS OF X-FACTOR AND THE AVENGERS.
WHEN MAGNETO ALLEGEDLY PERISHED, HE DIED A FAILURE IN THE GREATEST SENSE OF THE WORD --
-- FOR HE WAS A MAN UNABLE TO MAKE HIS OWN CHILDREN SEE THE JUSTNESS OF HIS CAUSE --
-- MUCH LESS A SPECIES OR AN ENTIRE PLANET.
HOW IRONIC, INDEED.

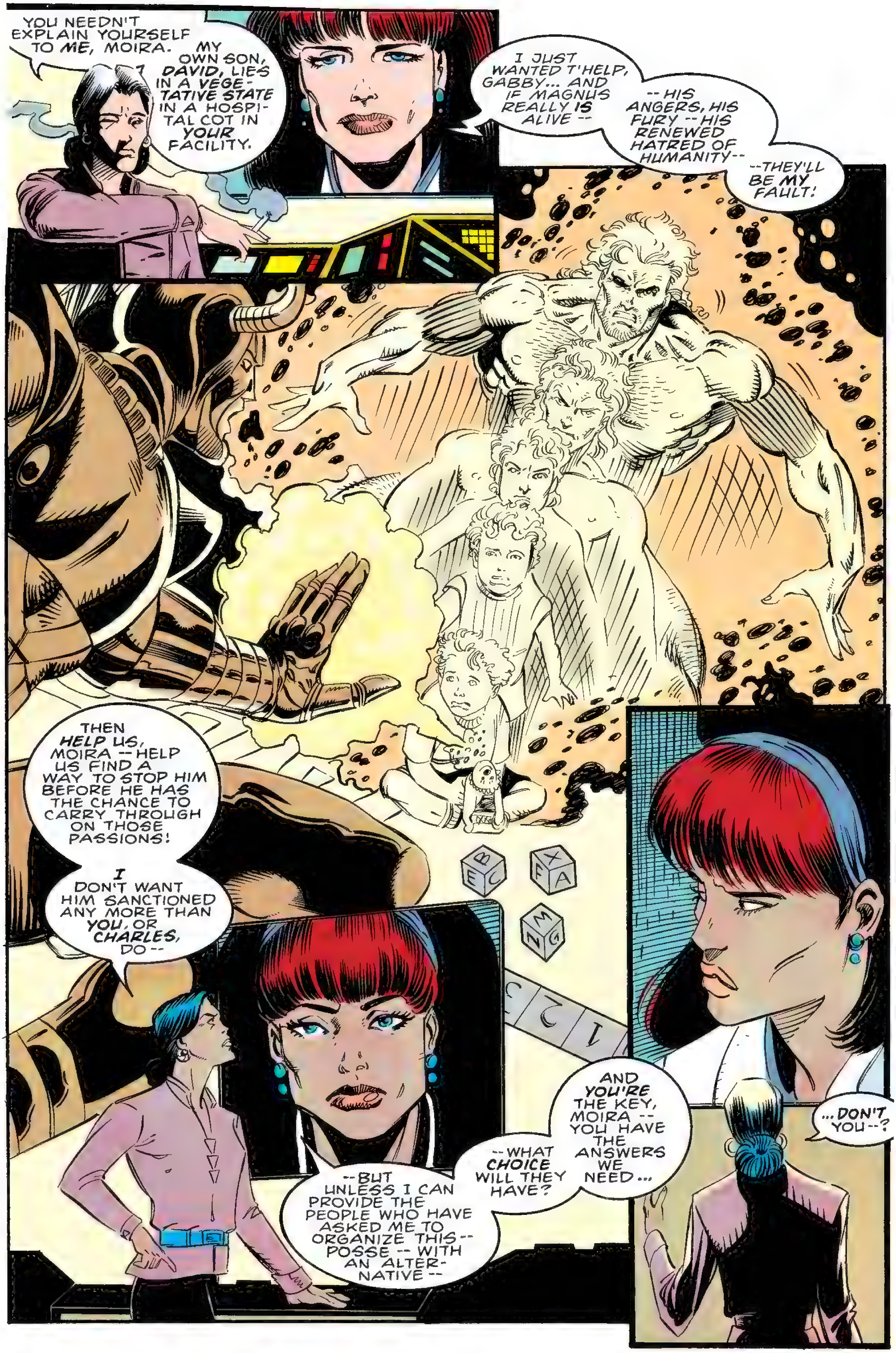

JACK DANIEL'S
HOW DID HE DO IT?
HOW COULD HE HAVE COME BACK TIME AND AGAIN --
--ALWAYS WITH A NEW METHOD OF CONQUEST.
ONE RIDICULOUS ATTEMPT AFTER ANOTHER.
AND WORST OF ALL -- HOW COULD ANYONE BELIEVE THAT SIMPLY HAVING HIS ASTEROID HOME INCINERATED WHILE ENTERING EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE COULD ACTUALLY KILL THIS MAN?
FOR GOD'S SAKE, HE WAS ONCE GENETICALLY REVERTED TO INFANCY AND STILL FOUND A WAY TO REGAIN HIS ADULTHOOD.
WHAT MAKES A MAN LIKE THAT CONTINUE TO BELIEVE IN HIMSELF?
KLIK
OH, YES, OF COURSE I WAS FRIGHTENED OF HIM, MISTER EISKALT.
DID HE HIT YOU, MISTER TOYNBEE? DID HE ABUSE YOU?
OH, CONSTANTLY. CONSTANTLY.


SO WHY DID YOU STAY WITH HIM FOR SO LONG?
I WAS YOUNGER THEN. YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND--
--HE HAD A WAY OF KEEPING YOU UNDER HIS CONTROL--
--AND NOT JUST THROUGH THE THREAT OF PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT, EITHER--
--HOW ELSE?
THROUGH SHEER FORCE OF WILL, MISTER EISKALT.
HE BELIEVED SO STRONGLY IN HIMSELF-- IN HIS GOALS-- IN HIS METHODS--
--THAT NO MATTER HOW LUDICROUS SOME OF THEM SOUNDED--
--YOU ACTUALLY BELIEVED HE WOULD ACCOMPLISH THEM!
HOW DID HITLER RALLY HIS COUNTRY AROUND HIM?
THROUGH THE INCREDIBLE ALLURE OF HIS CONFIDENCE--
--MAGNETO WAS MUCH THE SAME WAY, IN THAT REGARD.
FOR ALL HIS BLUSTER, FOR ALL HIS ILL-TEMPERED TREATMENT OF MYSELF AND MY COMRADES.
--WE STAYED WITH HIM BECAUSE HE MADE US BELIEVE WHAT HE STRONGLY BELIEVED HIMSELF--
--THAT HE WAS SUPERIOR TO US ALL--
--AND BY STAYING WITH HIM, WE WERE ENSURING OUR PLACE ALONGSIDE GREATNESS.

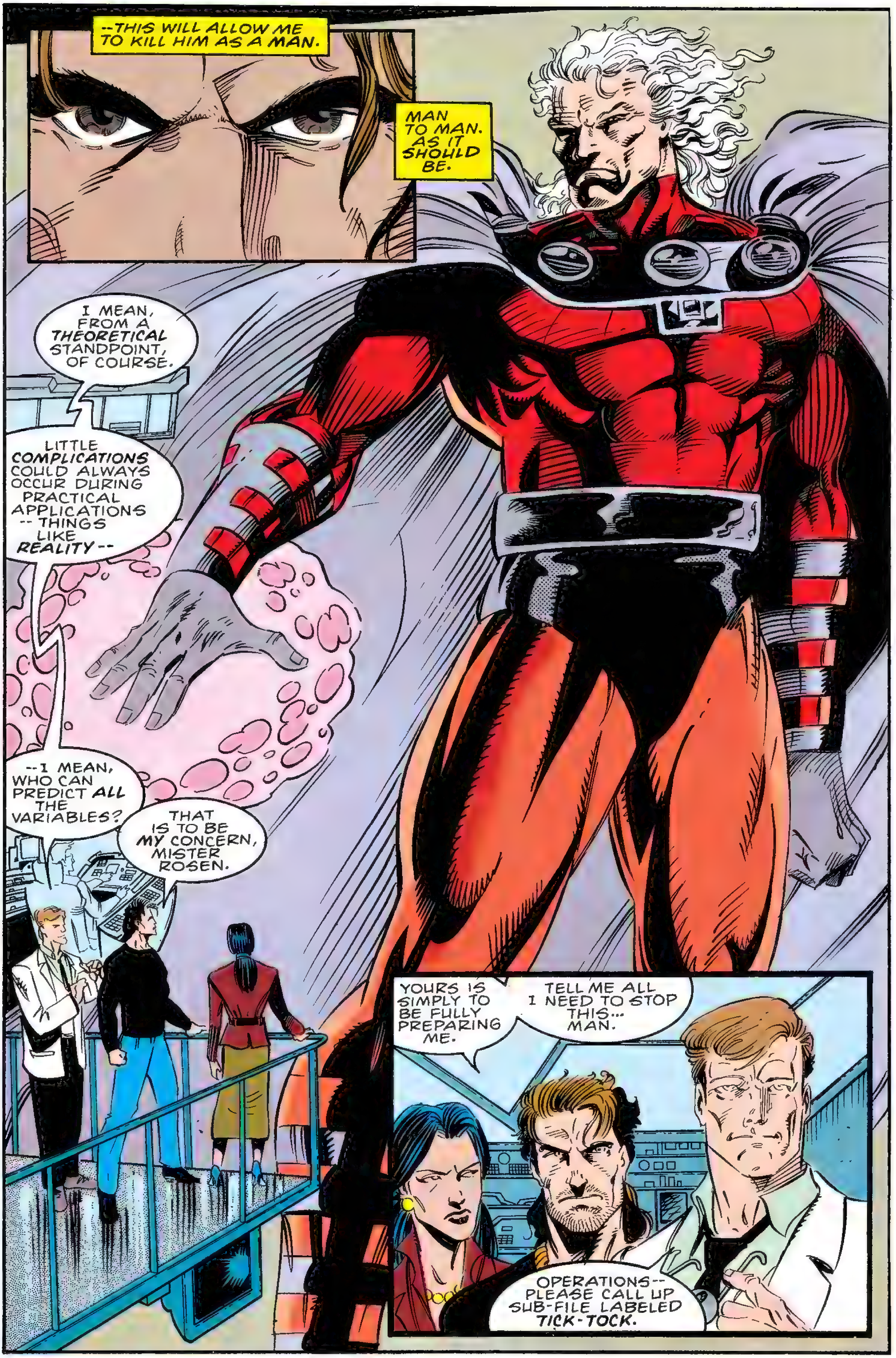
AND, FOR AS MUCH AS I HATE HIM, TO THIS DAY, I STILL BELIEVE HE MAY HAVE BEEN RIGHT...
KLIK
HOW?
HOW COULD HE DO IT?
TSSSS
HOW COULD ANY MAN REPEATEDLY FAIL IN HIS APPOINTED TASK--
--AND STILL HAVE THE SENSE OF SELF-CONFIDENCE, THE ENORMITY OF EGO--
--TO CONTINUE TO BELIEVE IN HIMSELF?
IT EITHER INDICATES A COMPLETELY DELUSIONAL SENSE OF SELF-WORTH...
...OR THE UNSHAKEABLE BELIEF IN THE CORRECTNESS OF ONE'S WAYS.
KNOWING WHICH COULD MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD WHEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO KILL HIM ARRIVES...

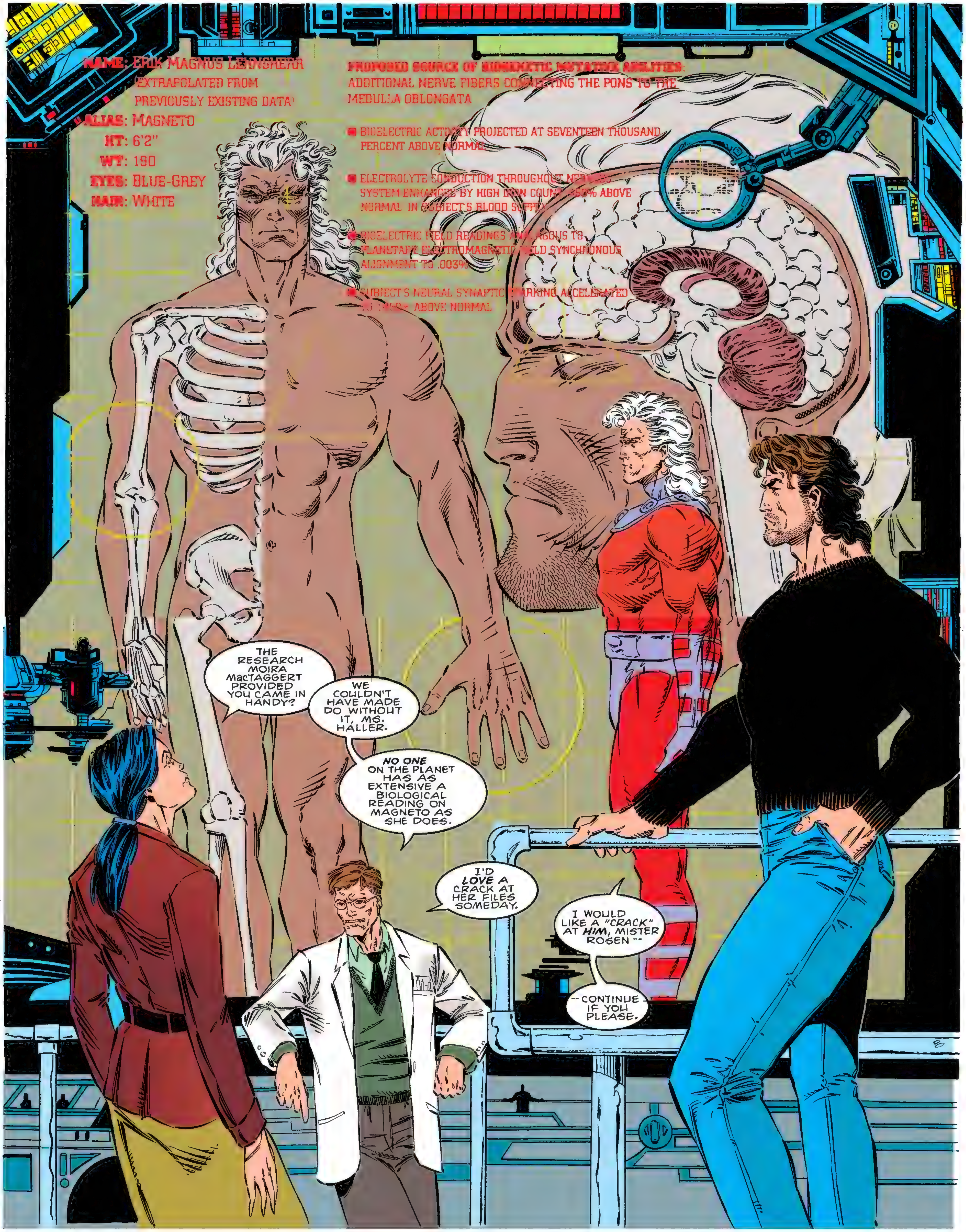

THE ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING WHICH HOUSES THE MOSSAD, ISRAEL'S SECURITY SERVICES.
I THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO SPEAK WITH ME, MOIRA.
GABBY, WHEN YOU AND I CHAT, IT'S NOT AS GABRIELLE HALLER, AMBASSADOR-AT-LARGE AND DOCTOR MOIRA MacTAGGERT, BIOGENETICS EXPERT --
-- BUT AS TWO FRIENDS WHO'VE SHARED MUCH OF THE SAME THINGS IN THIS LIFE.
MUCH OF THE SAME JOYS -- AND THE SAME PAINS.
CHARLES XAVIER?
WOMEN WHO'VE LOVED THAT MAN ARE FEW AND FAR BETWEEN. WE SHARE THAT EXPERIENCE TOGETHER.
I THOUGHT THAT LONELY DARK OCEAN OF LOSS WAS MINE ALONE TO DIVE INTO.
Ach, NO, GABBY--
-- BUT LISTEN T'US -- YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT MAGNUS, NO?
I NEED HELP... IN FINDING WAYS TO NEUTRALIZE HIM?
NEUTRAL-IZE--? BUT -- HE'S DEAD -- ISN'T HE?
RECENT EVIDENCE CALLS THAT INTO QUESTION.

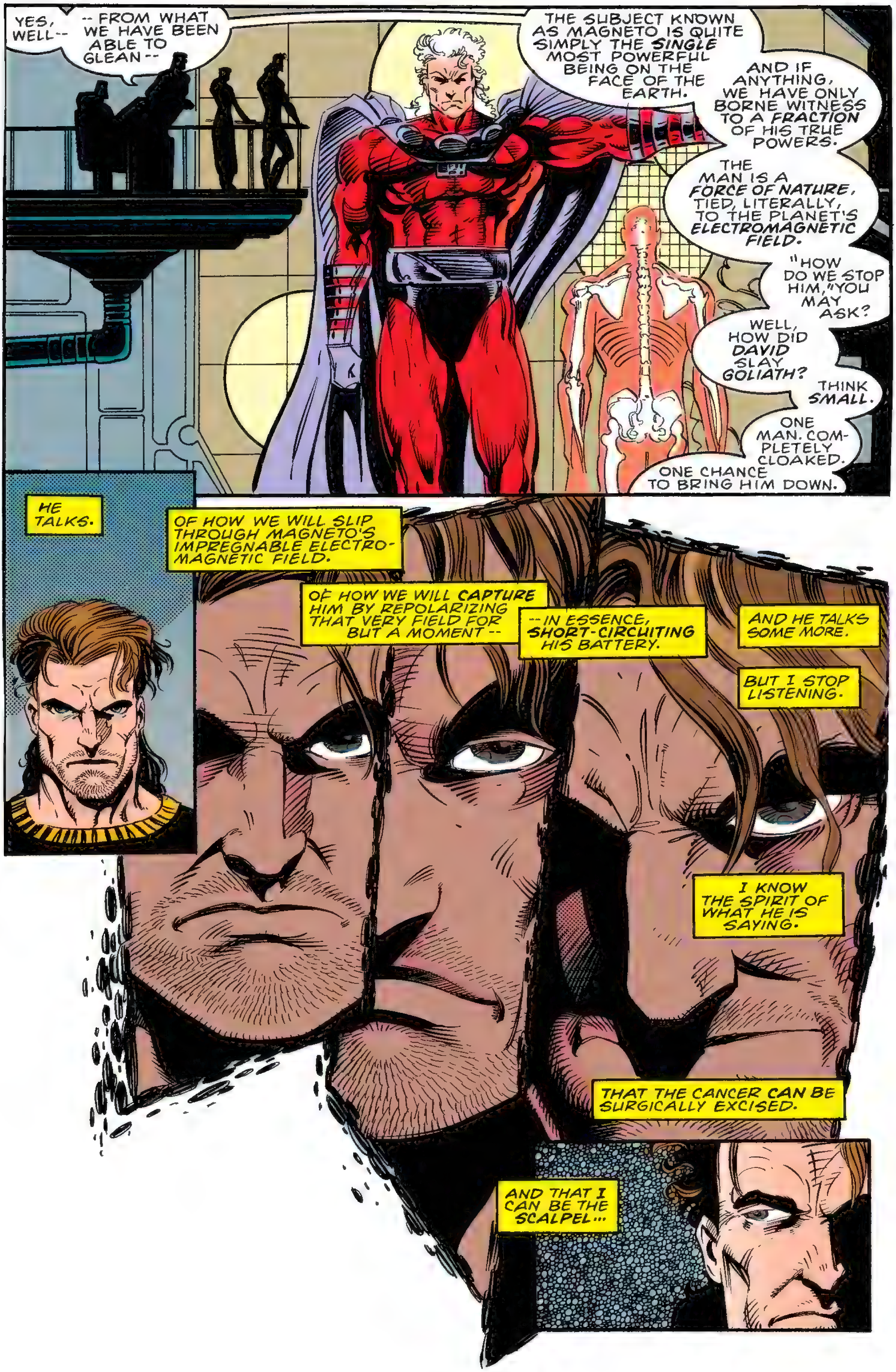

LORD KNOWS, I'M BEGINNIN' T'THINK THE MAN CAN'T DIE!
YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN HIS EYES, GABBY -- AFTER HE HAD BEEN REVERTED TO CHILDHOOD BY THE MUTANT, ALPHA, THAT HE HAD CREATED HIMSELF.
YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN HIS EYES. BLUE. CLEAR.
HE WAS A BEAUTIFUL CHILD.
I LOOKED INTO THOSE INNOCENT EYES, AND I FOOLISHLY THOUGHT I COULD CHANGE THE WAY THINGS WERE MEANT T'BE.
I STUDIED HIM TOP T'BOTTOM, INSIDE AN' OUT.
AS IF BY SEEING WHAT MADE HIM TICK GENETICALLY, I COULD ALTER THE KIND OF MAN HE TURNED INTO --
--MAYBE RAISE HIM RIGHT -- HELP HIM HARNESS HIS POWERS FOR GOOD.
I WAS WRONG -- I KNEW THAT THEN, I KNOW IT NOW --
--BUT I THOUGHT I COULD GIVE HIM A CHANCE --
--A CHANCE T'BE HEALTHY, AN' HAPPY... EYES BRIGHT WITH SUNSHINE SPARKLING IN THEM...
... THE KIND OF CHANCE MY OWN SON, KEVIN, NEVER HAD.

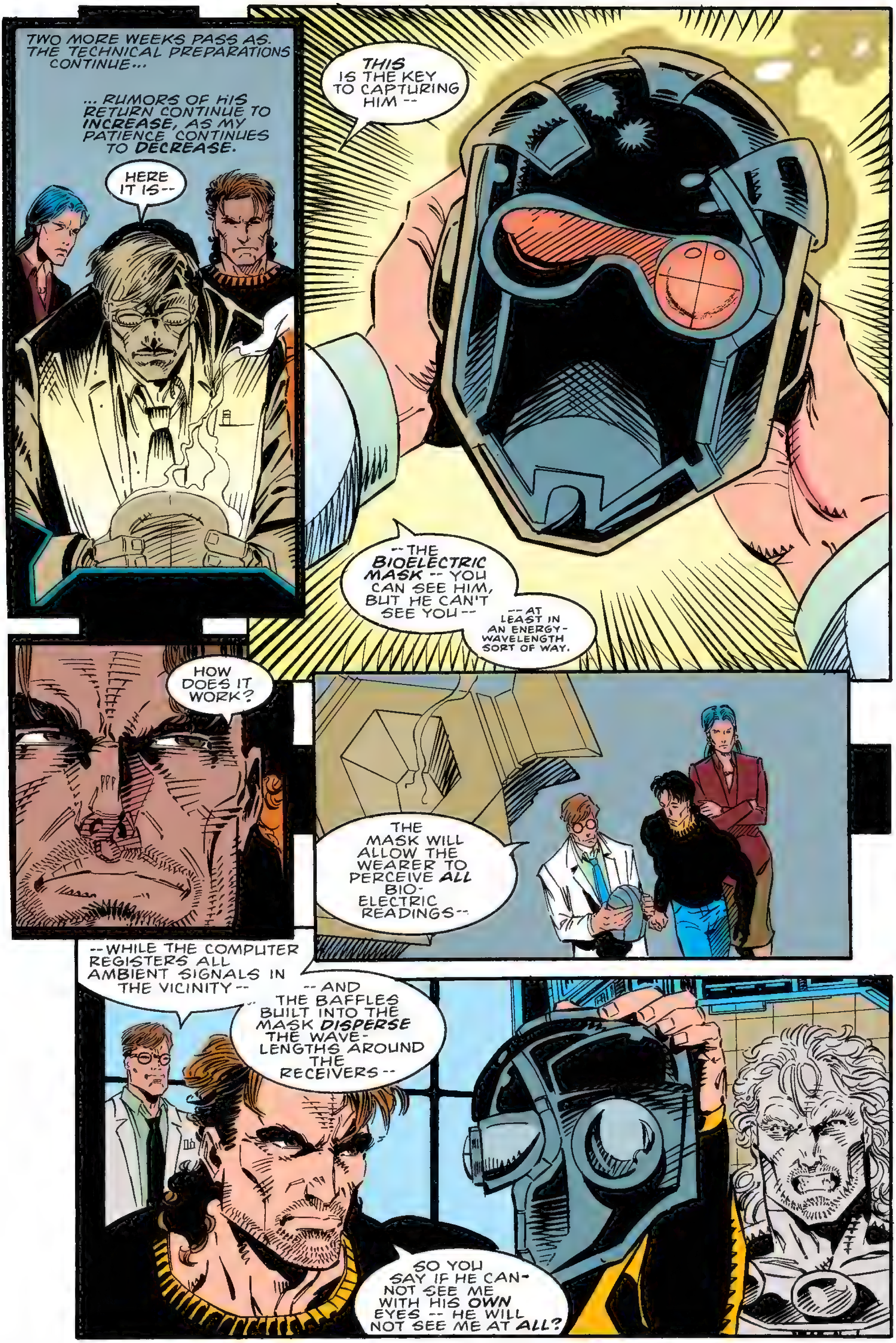

YOU NEEDN'T EXPLAIN YOURSELF TO ME, MOIRA. MY OWN SON, DAVID, LIES IN A VEGETATIVE STATE IN A HOSPITAL COT IN YOUR FACILITY.
I JUST WANTED T'HELP, GABBY... AND IF MAGNUS REALLY IS ALIVE --
-- HIS ANGERS, HIS FURY -- HIS RENEWED HATRED OF HUMANITY--
--THEY'LL BE MY FAULT!
THEN HELP US, MOIRA --HELP US FIND A WAY TO STOP HIM BEFORE HE HAS THE CHANCE TO CARRY THROUGH ON THOSE PASSIONS!
I DON'T WANT HIM SANCTIONED ANY MORE THAN YOU, OR CHARLES, DO --
--BUT UNLESS I CAN PROVIDE THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE ASKED ME TO ORGANIZE THIS-- POSSE -- WITH AN ALTERNATIVE --
--WHAT CHOICE WILL THEY HAVE?
AND YOU'RE THE KEY, MOIRA -- YOU HAVE THE ANSWERS WE NEED...
...DON'T YOU--?

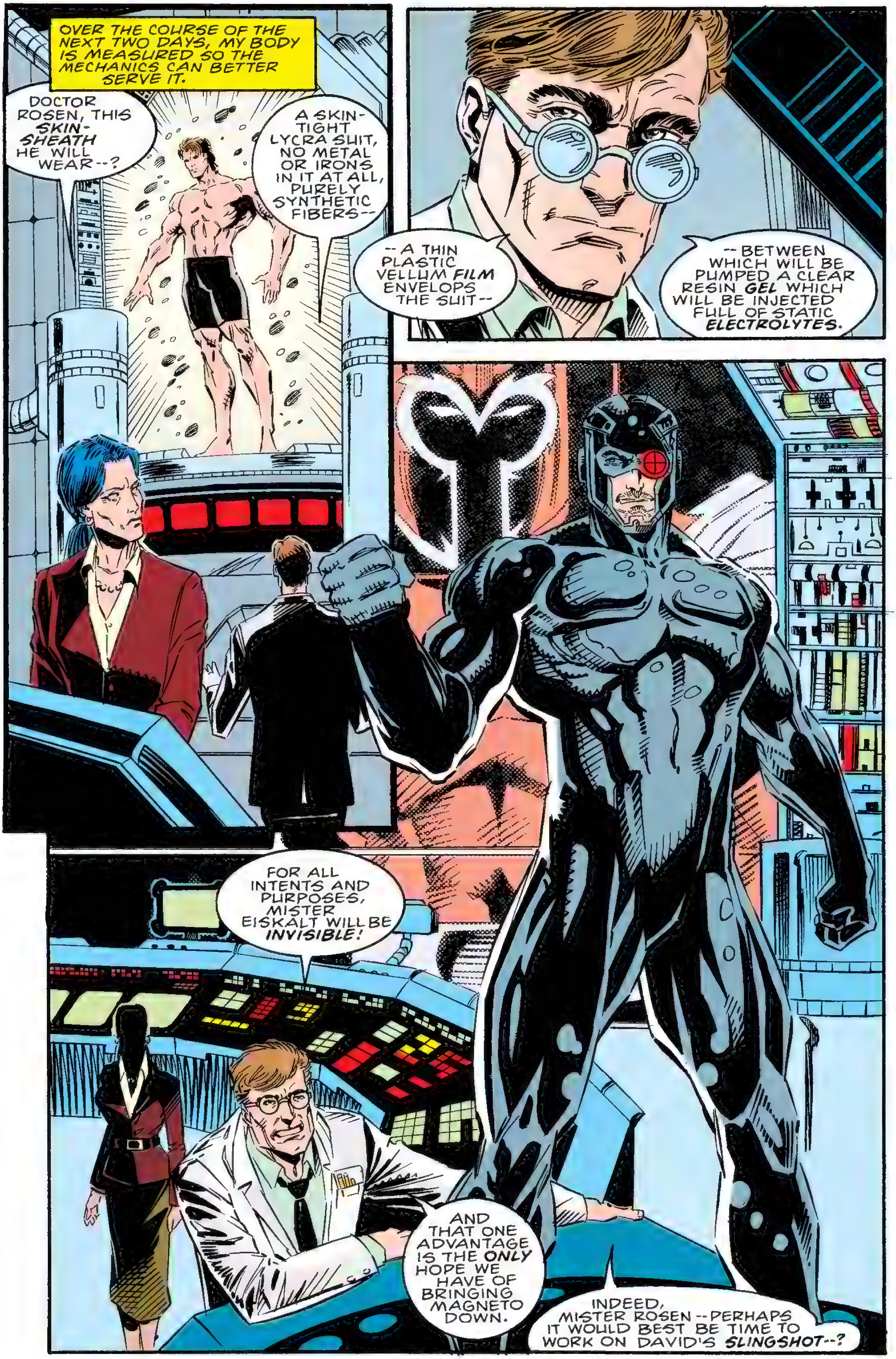
THE GENETECH BIO-RESEARCH FACILITY IN SAYVILLE, LONG ISLAND.
THREE WEEKS HAVE PASSED SINCE I LAST SAW GABRIELLE HALLER.
IN THAT TIME, IT WOULD APPEAR, WE HAVE BOTH BEEN VERY HARD AT WORK.
I HAVE PUT MYSELF INSIDE HIS MIND, DUG DEEP INTO HIS PSYCHE, STRIVING TO UNDERSTAND HIM -- PREDICT HIM --
-- WHILE HALLER HAS PUT TO TASK THE PEOPLE WHO WILL FIND A PHYSICAL WAY TO STOP THE MONSTER.
FOR THAT, WE HAVE SPENT THE LAST TWO DAYS AT THIS RESEARCH LAB, AS WALTER ROSEN, THE HEAD OF THE COMPANY, SHOWS US THE FRUITS OF HIS LABORS.
BELIEVE IT OR NOT --
-- AND I HARDLY DO MYSELF --
-- I REALLY THINK THIS HAS A GOOD CHANCE OF SUCCEEDING.
IT IS ELEGANT IN ITS SIMPLICITY.
FROM OUR ORIGINAL CONVERSATIONS, I'D EXPECTED SOMETHING MECHANICAL -- SOMETHING BULKY --
-- BUT THIS DESIGN ROSEN IS SHOWING US --

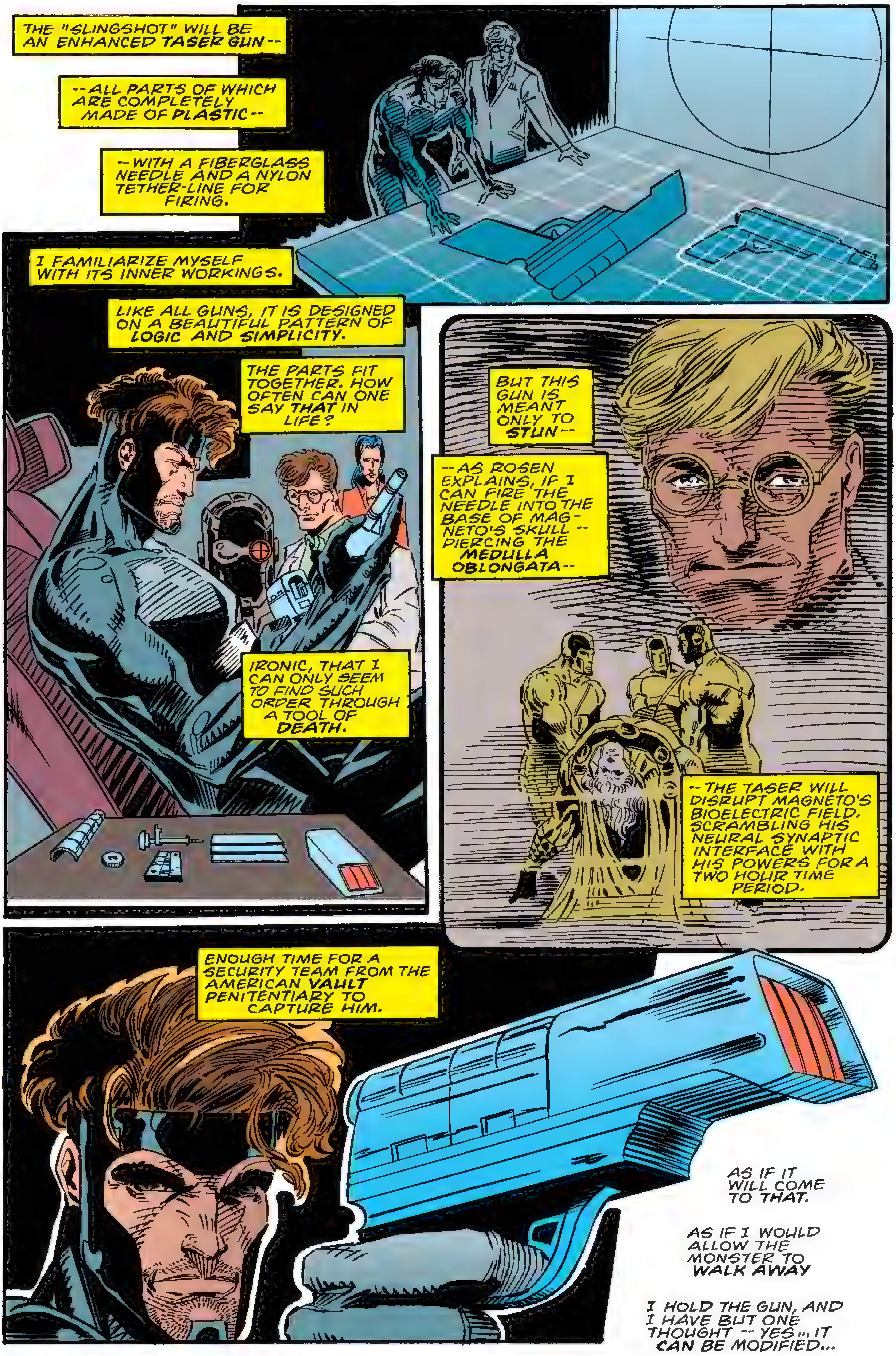

--THIS WILL ALLOW ME TO KILL HIM AS A MAN.
MAN TO MAN. AS IT SHOULD BE.
I MEAN, FROM A THEORETICAL STANDPOINT, OF COURSE.
LITTLE COMPLICATIONS COULD ALWAYS OCCUR DURING PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS -- THINGS LIKE REALITY --
--I MEAN, WHO CAN PREDICT ALL THE VARIABLES?
THAT IS TO BE MY CONCERN, MISTER ROSEN.
YOURS IS SIMPLY TO BE FULLY PREPARING ME.
TELL ME ALL I NEED TO STOP THIS... MAN.
OPERATIONS-- PLEASE CALL UP SUB-FILE LABELED TICK-TOCK.

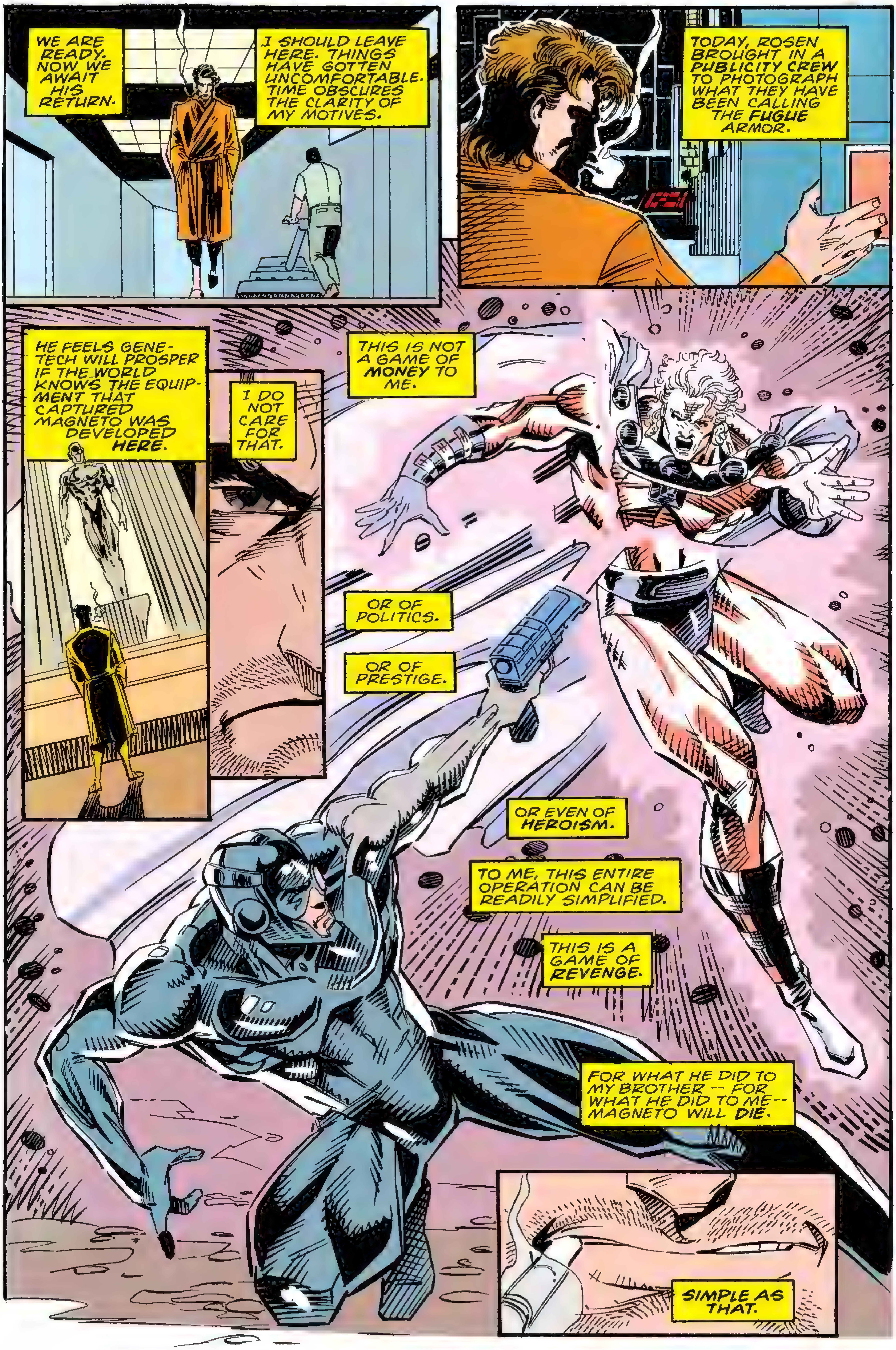

NAME: ERIK MAGNUS LEHNSHERR
(EXTRAPOLATED FROM PREVIOUSLY EXISTING DATA)
ALIAS: MAGNETO
HT: 6'2"
WT: 190
EYES: BLUE-GREY
HAIR: WHITE
PROPOSED SOURCE OF BIOMAGNETIC MUTATIVE ABILITIES:
ADDITIONAL NERVE FIBERS CONNECTING THE PONS TO THE MEDULLA OBLONGATA
BIOELECTRIC ACTIVITY PROJECTED AT SEVENTEEN THOUSAND PERCENT ABOVE NORMAL
ELECTROLYTE CONDUCTION THROUGHOUT NERVOUS SYSTEM ENHANCED BY HIGH IRON COUNT (350% ABOVE NORMAL) IN SUBJECT'S BLOOD SUPPLY
BIOELECTRIC FIELD READINGS ANALOGOUS TO PLANETARY ELECTROMAGNETIC FIELD SYNCHRONOUS ALIGNMENT TO .003%
SUBJECT'S NEURAL SYNAPTIC SPARKING ACCELERATED TO [illegible] ABOVE NORMAL
THE RESEARCH MOIRA MacTAGGERT PROVIDED YOU CAME IN HANDY?
WE COULDN'T HAVE MADE DO WITHOUT IT, MS. HALLER.
NO ONE ON THE PLANET HAS AS EXTENSIVE A BIOLOGICAL READING ON MAGNETO AS SHE DOES.
I'D LOVE A CRACK AT HER FILES SOMEDAY.
I WOULD LIKE A "CRACK" AT HIM, MISTER ROSEN --
-- CONTINUE IF YOU PLEASE.

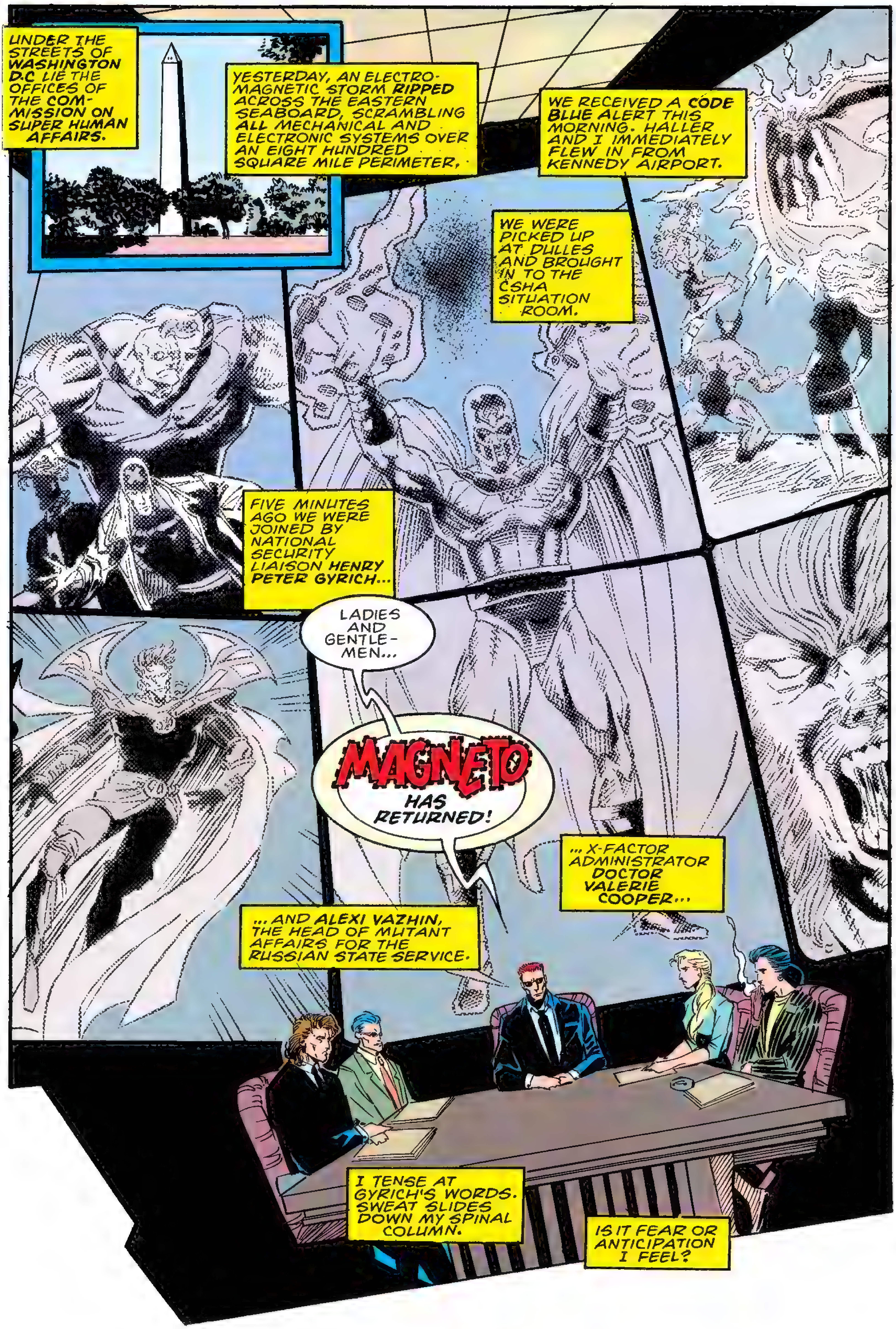

YES, WELL--
-- FROM WHAT WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO GLEAN --
THE SUBJECT KNOWN AS MAGNETO IS QUITE SIMPLY THE *SINGLE* MOST POWERFUL BEING ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH.
AND IF ANYTHING, WE HAVE ONLY BORNE WITNESS TO A *FRACTION* OF HIS TRUE POWERS.
THE MAN IS A *FORCE OF NATURE*, TIED, LITERALLY, TO THE PLANET'S *ELECTROMAGNETIC FIELD*.
"HOW DO WE STOP HIM," YOU MAY ASK?
WELL, HOW DID *DAVID* SLAY *GOLIATH?*
THINK *SMALL*.
ONE MAN. COMPLETELY CLOAKED.
ONE CHANCE TO BRING HIM DOWN.
HE TALKS.
OF HOW WE WILL SLIP THROUGH MAGNETO'S IMPREGNABLE ELECTROMAGNETIC FIELD.
OF HOW WE WILL *CAPTURE* HIM BY REPOLARIZING THAT VERY FIELD FOR BUT A MOMENT --
-- IN ESSENCE, *SHORT-CIRCUITING* HIS BATTERY.
AND HE TALKS SOME MORE.
BUT I STOP LISTENING.
I KNOW THE SPIRIT OF WHAT HE IS SAYING.
THAT THE CANCER *CAN* BE SURGICALLY EXCISED.
AND THAT I CAN BE THE *SCALPEL*...

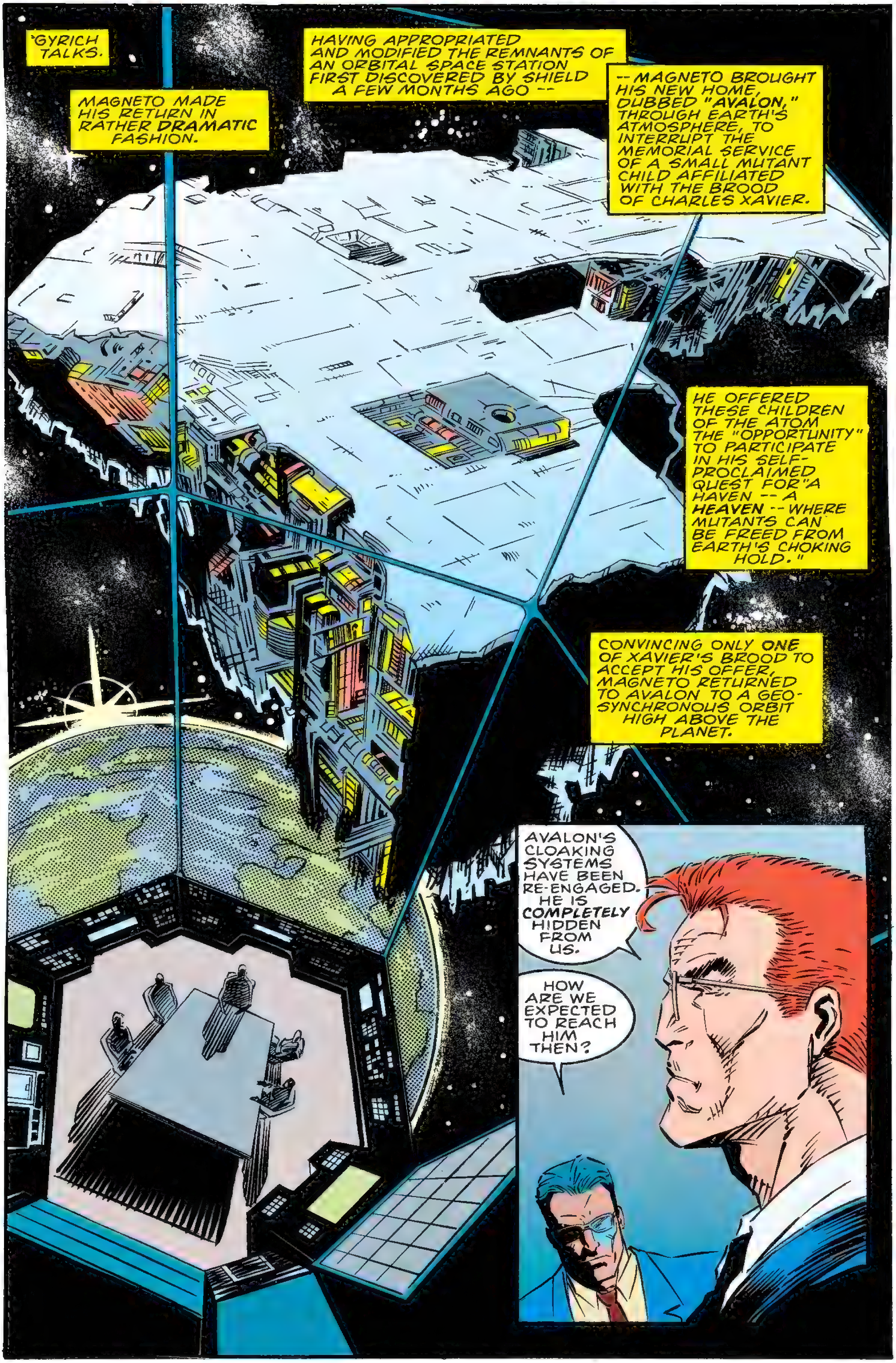

TWO MORE WEEKS PASS AS THE TECHNICAL PREPARATIONS CONTINUE...
... RUMORS OF HIS RETURN CONTINUE TO *INCREASE*, AS MY PATIENCE CONTINUES TO *DECREASE*.
HERE IT IS--
THIS IS THE KEY TO CAPTURING HIM --
--THE *BIOELECTRIC MASK* -- YOU CAN SEE HIM, BUT HE CAN'T SEE YOU --
-- AT LEAST IN AN ENERGY-WAVELENGTH SORT OF WAY.
HOW DOES IT WORK?
THE MASK WILL ALLOW THE WEARER TO PERCEIVE *ALL* BIO-ELECTRIC READINGS--
--WHILE THE COMPUTER REGISTERS ALL AMBIENT SIGNALS IN THE VICINITY--
-- AND THE BAFFLES BUILT INTO THE MASK *DISPERSE* THE WAVE-LENGTHS AROUND THE RECEIVERS --
SO YOU SAY IF HE CANNOT SEE ME WITH HIS *OWN* EYES -- HE WILL NOT SEE ME AT *ALL*?

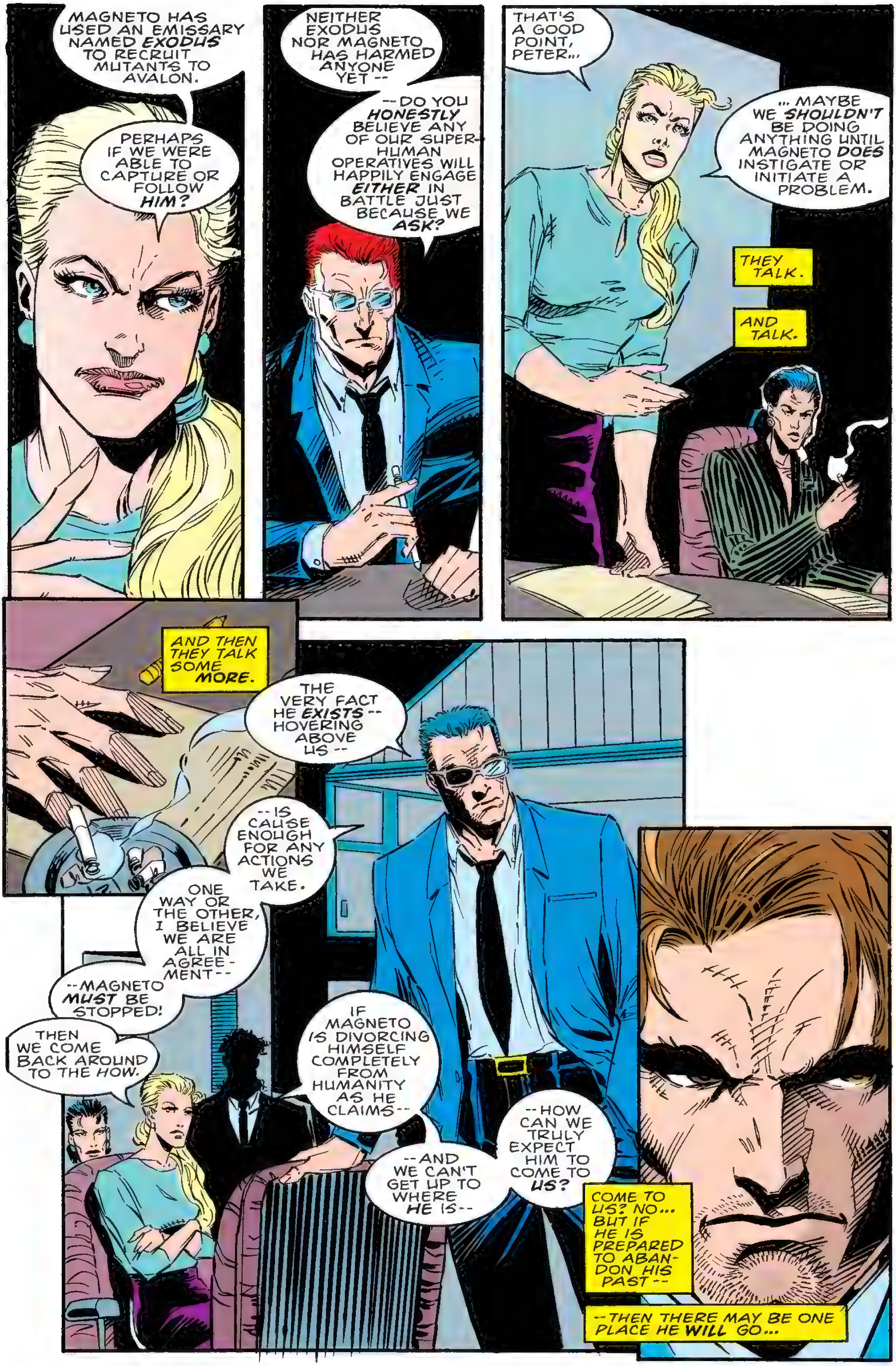

OVER THE COURSE OF THE NEXT TWO DAYS, MY BODY IS MEASURED SO THE MECHANICS CAN BETTER SERVE IT.
DOCTOR ROSEN, THIS SKIN-SHEATH HE WILL WEAR--?
A SKIN-TIGHT LYCRA SUIT, NO METAL OR IRONS IN IT AT ALL, PURELY SYNTHETIC FIBERS--
-- A THIN PLASTIC VELLUM FILM ENVELOPS THE SUIT--
-- BETWEEN WHICH WILL BE PUMPED A CLEAR RESIN GEL WHICH WILL BE INJECTED FULL OF STATIC ELECTROLYTES.
FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES, MISTER EISKALT WILL BE INVISIBLE!
AND THAT ONE ADVANTAGE IS THE ONLY HOPE WE HAVE OF BRINGING MAGNETO DOWN.
INDEED, MISTER ROSEN -- PERHAPS IT WOULD BEST BE TIME TO WORK ON DAVID'S SLINGSHOT--?

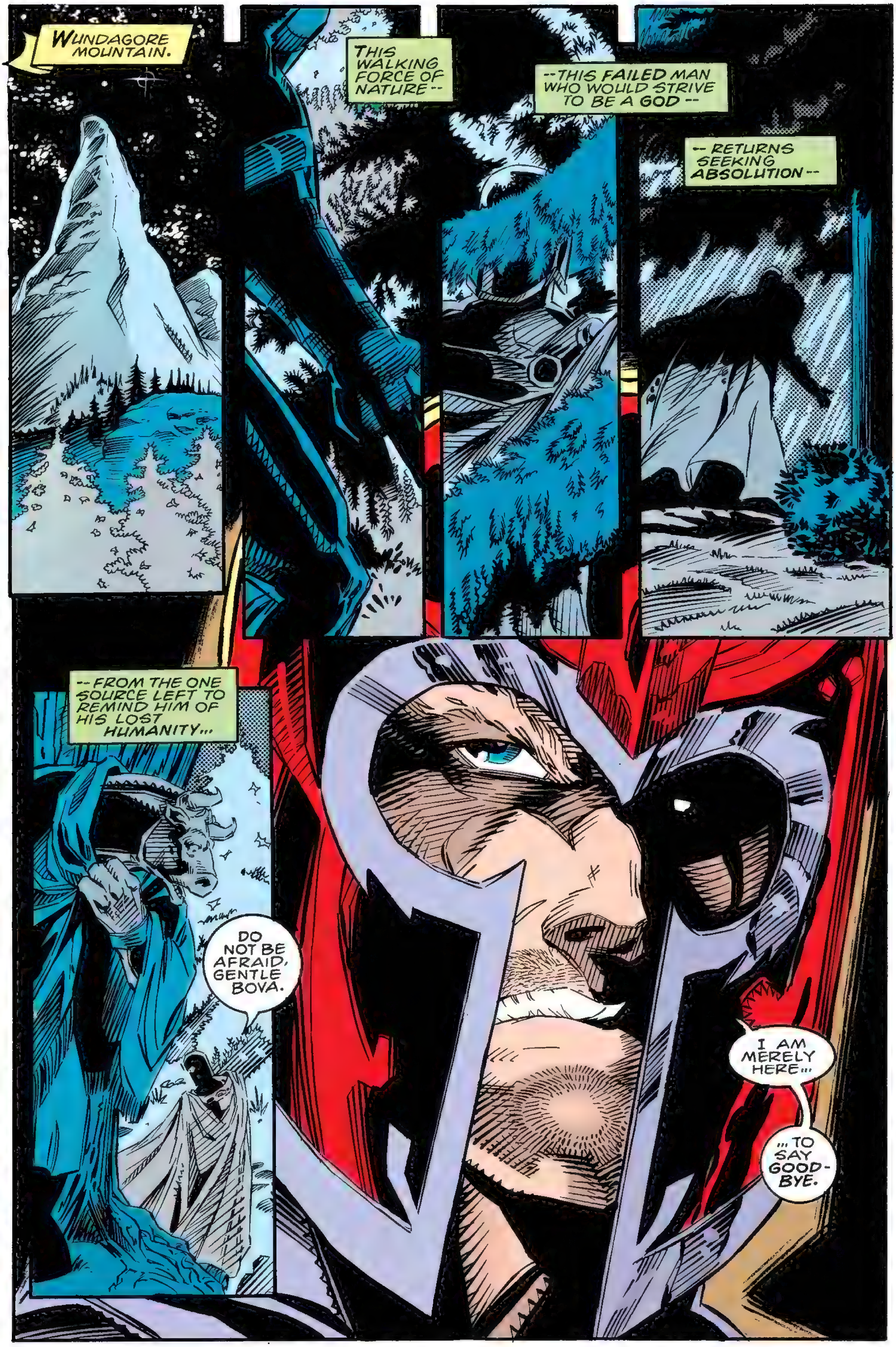

THE "SLINGSHOT" WILL BE AN ENHANCED TASER GUN--
--ALL PARTS OF WHICH ARE COMPLETELY MADE OF PLASTIC--
--WITH A FIBERGLASS NEEDLE AND A NYLON TETHER-LINE FOR FIRING.
I FAMILIARIZE MYSELF WITH ITS INNER WORKINGS.
LIKE ALL GUNS, IT IS DESIGNED ON A BEAUTIFUL PATTERN OF LOGIC AND SIMPLICITY.
THE PARTS FIT TOGETHER. HOW OFTEN CAN ONE SAY THAT IN LIFE?
IRONIC, THAT I CAN ONLY SEEM TO FIND SUCH ORDER THROUGH A TOOL OF DEATH.
BUT THIS GUN IS MEANT ONLY TO STUN--
--AS ROSEN EXPLAINS, IF I CAN FIRE THE NEEDLE INTO THE BASE OF MAGNETO'S SKULL -- PIERCING THE MEDULLA OBLONGATA--
--THE TASER WILL DISRUPT MAGNETO'S BIOELECTRIC FIELD, SCRAMBLING HIS NEURAL SYNAPTIC INTERFACE WITH HIS POWERS FOR A TWO HOUR TIME PERIOD.
ENOUGH TIME FOR A SECURITY TEAM FROM THE AMERICAN VAULT PENITENTIARY TO CAPTURE HIM.
AS IF IT WILL COME TO THAT.
AS IF I WOULD ALLOW THE MONSTER TO WALK AWAY
I HOLD THE GUN, AND I HAVE BUT ONE THOUGHT -- YES... IT CAN BE MODIFIED...

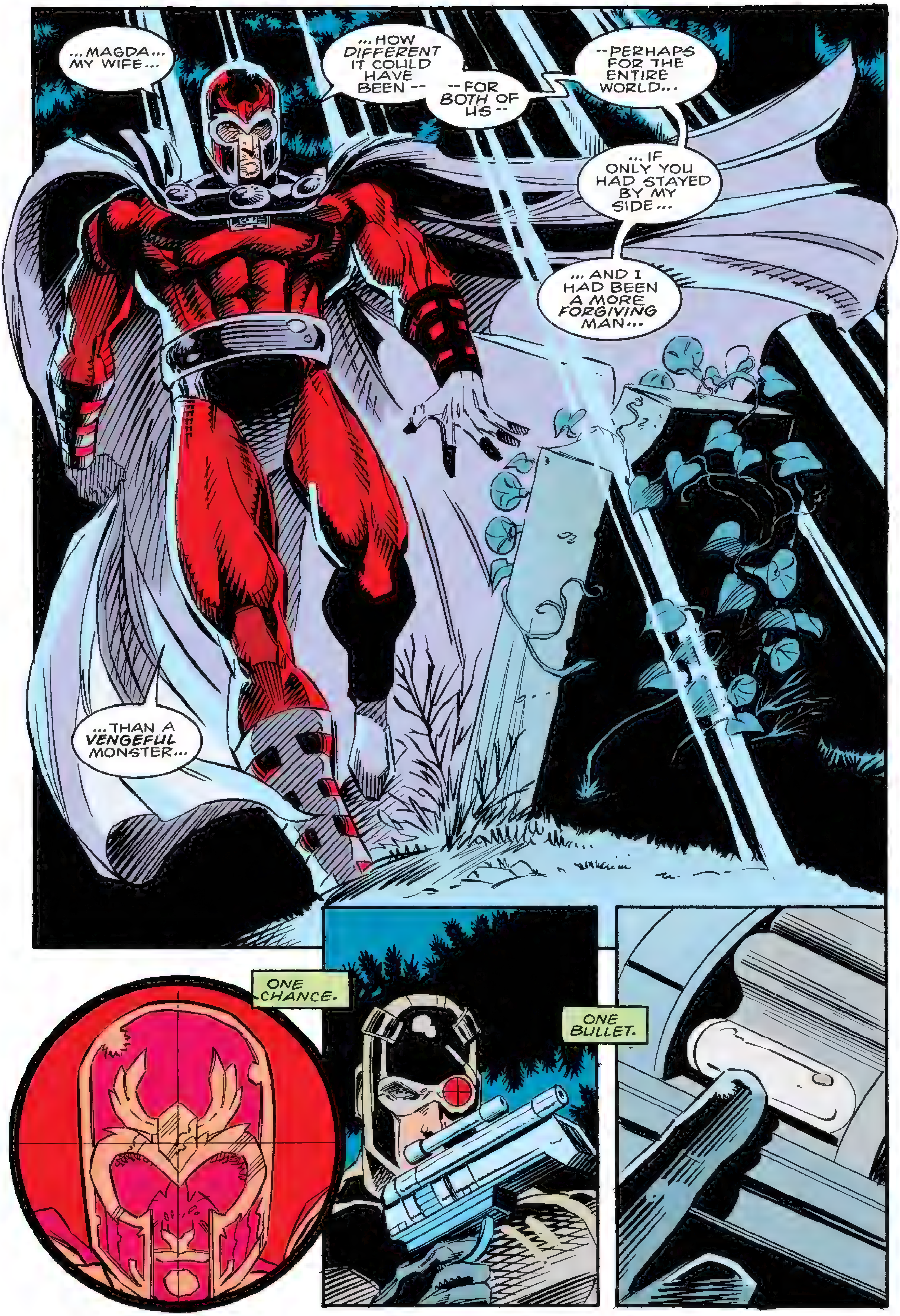

WE ARE READY. NOW WE AWAIT HIS RETURN.
I SHOULD LEAVE HERE. THINGS HAVE GOTTEN UNCOMFORTABLE. TIME OBSCURES THE CLARITY OF MY MOTIVES.
TODAY, ROSEN BROUGHT IN A PUBLICITY CREW TO PHOTOGRAPH WHAT THEY HAVE BEEN CALLING THE FUGUE ARMOR.
HE FEELS GENE-TECH WILL PROSPER IF THE WORLD KNOWS THE EQUIPMENT THAT CAPTURED MAGNETO WAS DEVELOPED HERE.
I DO NOT CARE FOR THAT.
THIS IS NOT A GAME OF MONEY TO ME.
OR OF POLITICS.
OR OF PRESTIGE.
OR EVEN OF HEROISM.
TO ME, THIS ENTIRE OPERATION CAN BE READILY SIMPLIFIED.
THIS IS A GAME OF REVENGE.
FOR WHAT HE DID TO MY BROTHER -- FOR WHAT HE DID TO ME -- MAGNETO WILL DIE.
SIMPLE AS THAT.


UNDER THE STREETS OF WASHINGTON D.C LIE THE OFFICES OF THE COMMISSION ON SUPER HUMAN AFFAIRS.
YESTERDAY, AN ELECTROMAGNETIC STORM RIPPED ACROSS THE EASTERN SEABOARD, SCRAMBLING ALL MECHANICAL AND ELECTRONIC SYSTEMS OVER AN EIGHT HUNDRED SQUARE MILE PERIMETER.
WE RECEIVED A CODE BLUE ALERT THIS MORNING. HALLER AND I IMMEDIATELY FLEW IN FROM KENNEDY AIRPORT.
WE WERE PICKED UP AT DULLES AND BROUGHT IN TO THE CSHA SITUATION ROOM.
FIVE MINUTES AGO WE WERE JOINED BY NATIONAL SECURITY LIAISON HENRY PETER GYRICH...
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN...
MAGNETO HAS RETURNED!
...X-FACTOR ADMINISTRATOR DOCTOR VALERIE COOPER...
...AND ALEXI VAZHIN, THE HEAD OF MUTANT AFFAIRS FOR THE RUSSIAN STATE SERVICE.
I TENSE AT GYRICH'S WORDS. SWEAT SLIDES DOWN MY SPINAL COLUMN.
IS IT FEAR OR ANTICIPATION I FEEL?

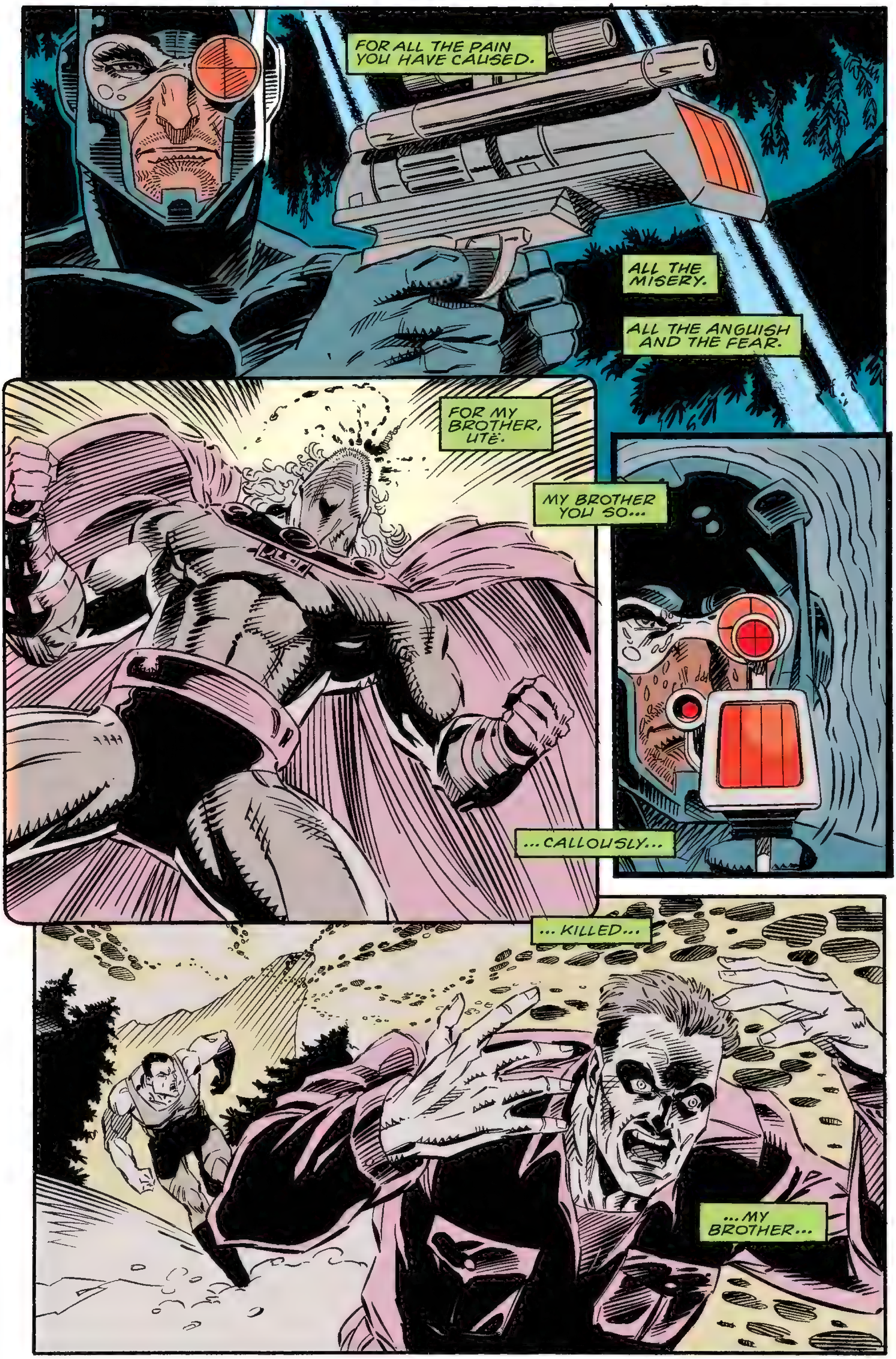

"GYRICH TALKS.
MAGNETO MADE HIS RETURN IN RATHER **DRAMATIC** FASHION.
HAVING APPROPRIATED AND MODIFIED THE REMNANTS OF AN ORBITAL SPACE STATION FIRST DISCOVERED BY SHIELD A FEW MONTHS AGO --
-- MAGNETO BROUGHT HIS NEW HOME, DUBBED **"AVALON,"** THROUGH EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE, TO INTERRUPT THE MEMORIAL SERVICE OF A SMALL MUTANT CHILD AFFILIATED WITH THE BROOD OF CHARLES XAVIER.
HE OFFERED THESE CHILDREN OF THE ATOM THE "OPPORTUNITY" TO PARTICIPATE IN HIS SELF-PROCLAIMED QUEST FOR "A HAVEN -- A **HEAVEN** -- WHERE MUTANTS CAN BE FREED FROM EARTH'S CHOKING HOLD."
CONVINCING ONLY **ONE** OF XAVIER'S BROOD TO ACCEPT HIS OFFER, MAGNETO RETURNED TO AVALON TO A GEO-SYNCHRONOUS ORBIT HIGH ABOVE THE PLANET.
AVALON'S CLOAKING SYSTEMS HAVE BEEN RE-ENGAGED. HE IS **COMPLETELY** HIDDEN FROM US.
HOW ARE WE EXPECTED TO REACH HIM THEN?

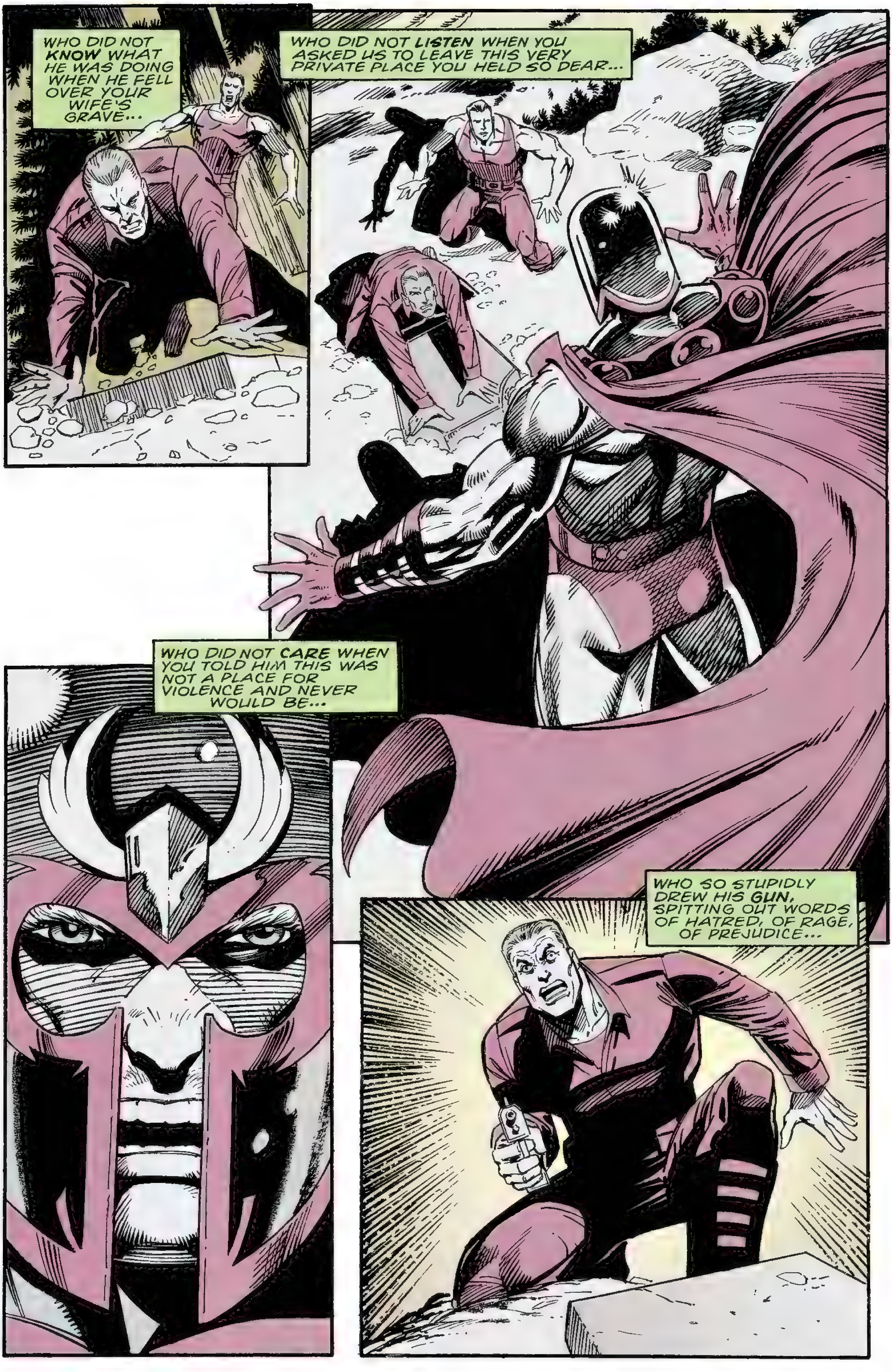

MAGNETO HAS USED AN EMISSARY NAMED *EXODUS* TO RECRUIT MUTANTS TO AVALON.
PERHAPS IF WE WERE ABLE TO CAPTURE OR FOLLOW *HIM?*
NEITHER EXODUS NOR MAGNETO HAS HARMED ANYONE YET --
--DO YOU *HONESTLY* BELIEVE ANY OF OUR SUPER-HUMAN OPERATIVES WILL HAPPILY ENGAGE *EITHER* IN BATTLE JUST BECAUSE WE *ASK?*
THAT'S A GOOD POINT, PETER...
... MAYBE WE *SHOULDN'T* BE DOING ANYTHING UNTIL MAGNETO *DOES* INSTIGATE OR INITIATE A PROBLEM.
THEY TALK.
AND TALK.
AND THEN THEY TALK SOME *MORE.*
THE VERY FACT HE *EXISTS* -- HOVERING ABOVE US --
-- IS CAUSE ENOUGH FOR ANY ACTIONS WE TAKE.
ONE WAY OR THE OTHER, I BELIEVE WE ARE ALL IN AGREEMENT --
--MAGNETO *MUST* BE STOPPED!
THEN WE COME BACK AROUND TO THE *HOW.*
IF MAGNETO *IS* DIVORCING HIMSELF COMPLETELY FROM HUMANITY AS HE CLAIMS --
--HOW CAN WE TRULY EXPECT HIM TO COME TO *US?*
--AND WE CAN'T GET UP TO WHERE *HE* IS --
COME TO US? NO... BUT IF HE IS PREPARED TO ABANDON HIS PAST --
--THEN THERE MAY BE ONE PLACE HE *WILL* GO...


WUNDAGORE MOUNTAIN.
THIS WALKING FORCE OF NATURE --
--THIS FAILED MAN WHO WOULD STRIVE TO BE A GOD --
-- RETURNS SEEKING ABSOLUTION --
-- FROM THE ONE SOURCE LEFT TO REMIND HIM OF HIS LOST HUMANITY...
DO NOT BE AFRAID, GENTLE BOVA.
I AM MERELY HERE...
...TO SAY GOOD-BYE.

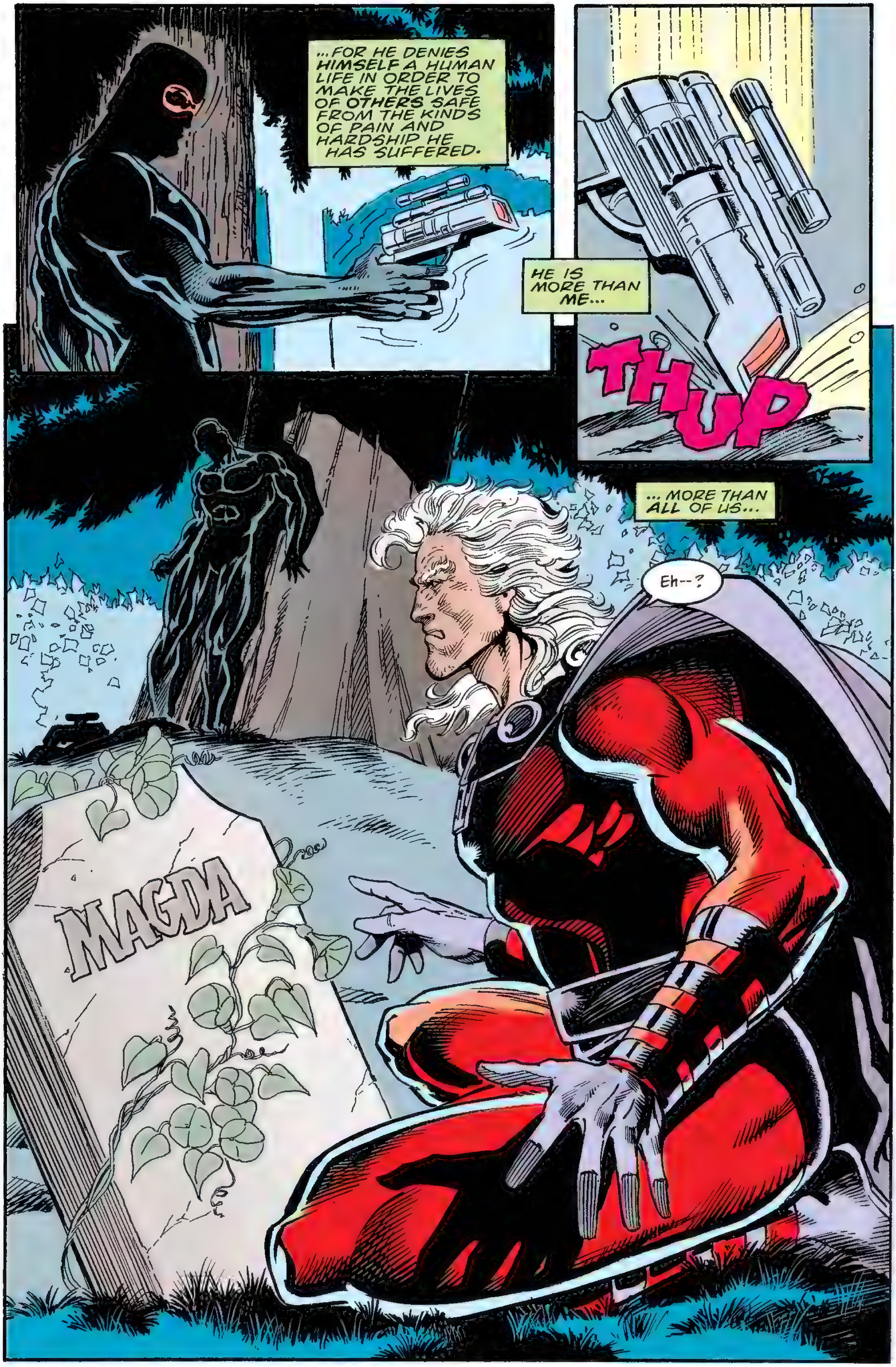

...MAGDA... MY WIFE...
...HOW DIFFERENT IT COULD HAVE BEEN --
-- FOR BOTH OF US --
-- PERHAPS FOR THE ENTIRE WORLD...
...IF ONLY YOU HAD STAYED BY MY SIDE...
...AND I HAD BEEN A MORE *FORGIVING* MAN...
...THAN A ***VENGEFUL*** MONSTER...
ONE CHANCE.
ONE BULLET.

MAGDA
POINT BLANK.

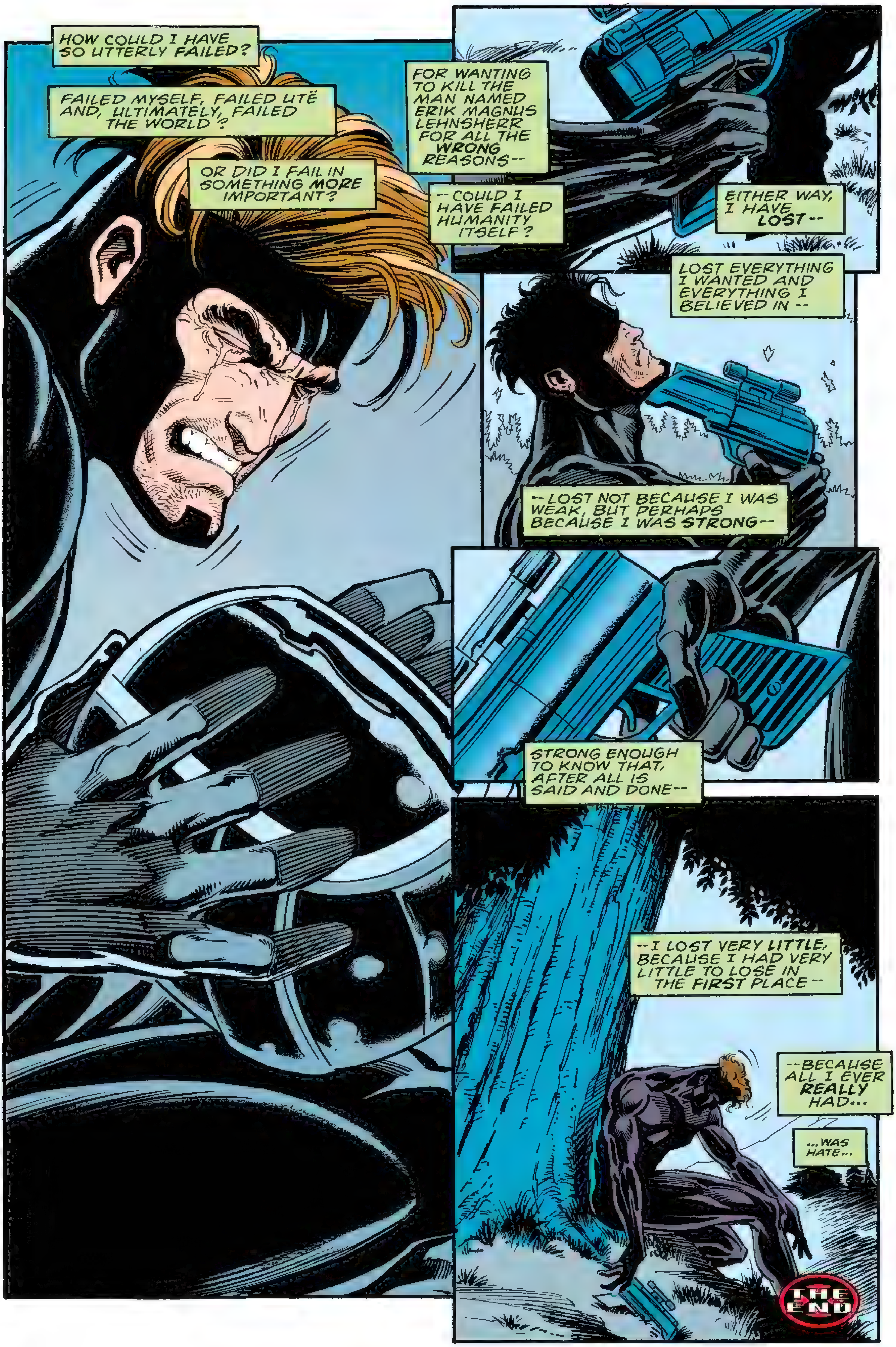

FOR ALL THE PAIN YOU HAVE CAUSED.
ALL THE MISERY.
ALL THE ANGUISH AND THE FEAR.
FOR MY BROTHER, UTË.
MY BROTHER YOU SO...
...CALLOUSLY...
...KILLED...
...MY BROTHER...


WHO DID NOT KNOW WHAT HE WAS DOING WHEN HE FELL OVER YOUR WIFE'S GRAVE...
WHO DID NOT LISTEN WHEN YOU ASKED US TO LEAVE THIS VERY PRIVATE PLACE YOU HELD SO DEAR...
WHO DID NOT CARE WHEN YOU TOLD HIM THIS WAS NOT A PLACE FOR VIOLENCE AND NEVER WOULD BE...
WHO SO STUPIDLY DREW HIS GUN, SPITTING OUT WORDS OF HATRED, OF RAGE, OF PREJUDICE...

WHO **FIRED** AT YOU WITH A MURDEROUS RAGE, POINT BLANK, RIGHT AT YOUR HEAD...
WHO WAS CAUGHT IN THE **BACKLASH** AS YOU SIMPLY GESTURED TO PROTECT YOURSELF IN A **MAGNETIC** COCCOON...
...WHO **DIED** WHEN HIS **OWN BULLET** RICOCHETED AND PIERCED HIS THICK SKULL...
WHO FORCED YOU TO BREAK A VOW OF **HONOR** TO THE MEMORY OF YOUR WIFE...
WHO MAYBE, JUST **MAYBE**, MIGHT HAVE BEEN ULTIMATELY RESPONSIBLE, IN SOME SMALL WAY, FOR SETTING YOU UPON THE COURSE OF YOUR LIFE...
UTE... MY BROTHER... A SIMPLE, STUPID MAN... NOT A **SYMBOL** FOR A **CAUSE**...
...BUT A FRIGHTENED **LAMB** WHO SOUGHT TO STRIKE BACK AT THE **WOLF**...
...THE WOLF WHO WAS **DOING** WHAT IT WAS MEANT TO **DO**-- **BEING** WHAT IT WAS MEANT TO BE...
...**NOT** A MONSTER, NOT A **VILLAIN**, NOT **LESS** THAN HUMAN...
...BUT **MORE**...


...FOR HE DENIES HIMSELF A HUMAN LIFE IN ORDER TO MAKE THE LIVES OF OTHERS SAFE FROM THE KINDS OF PAIN AND HARDSHIP HE HAS SUFFERED.
HE IS MORE THAN ME...
THUP
... MORE THAN ALL OF US...
Eh--?
MAGDA

HE SAYS NOTHING.
HE KNOWS HE WAS JUST A WEAKNESS AWAY FROM DYING.
MY WEAKNESS.
AS I AM AWARE I WAS JUST AN ACT OF COMPASSION AWAY FROM BEING KILLED.
HIS ACT OF COMPASSION.
I LIVE BECAUSE OF AN ACT OF HUMANITY ON THE PART OF THE CREATURE I HAVE CALLED INHUMAN.


HOW COULD I HAVE SO UTTERLY FAILED?
FAILED MYSELF, FAILED UTË AND, ULTIMATELY, FAILED THE WORLD?
OR DID I FAIL IN SOMETHING MORE IMPORTANT?
FOR WANTING TO KILL THE MAN NAMED ERIK MAGNUS LEHNSHERR FOR ALL THE WRONG REASONS--
--COULD I HAVE FAILED HUMANITY ITSELF?
EITHER WAY, I HAVE LOST--
LOST EVERYTHING I WANTED AND EVERYTHING I BELIEVED IN--
--LOST NOT BECAUSE I WAS WEAK, BUT PERHAPS BECAUSE I WAS STRONG--
STRONG ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT, AFTER ALL IS SAID AND DONE--
--I LOST VERY LITTLE, BECAUSE I HAD VERY LITTLE TO LOSE IN THE FIRST PLACE--
--BECAUSE ALL I EVER REALLY HAD...
...WAS HATE...
THE END

Jeff Albrecht

MARVEL SUPER-HEROES #15 PINUP BY JEFF ALBRECHT

MARVEL COMICS
THE UNCANNY
X-MEN
$1.25 US
$1.60 CAN/UK 85p
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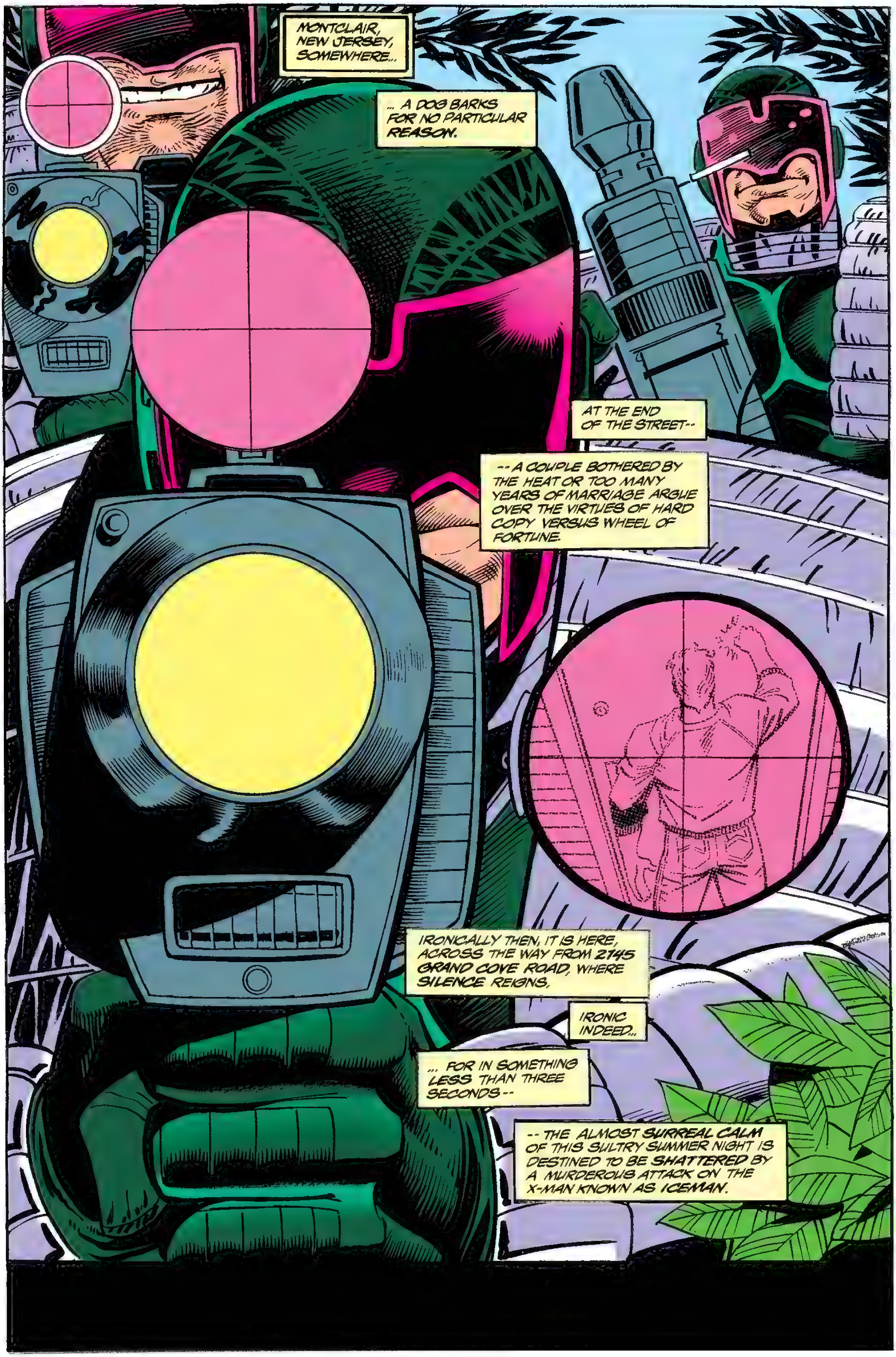
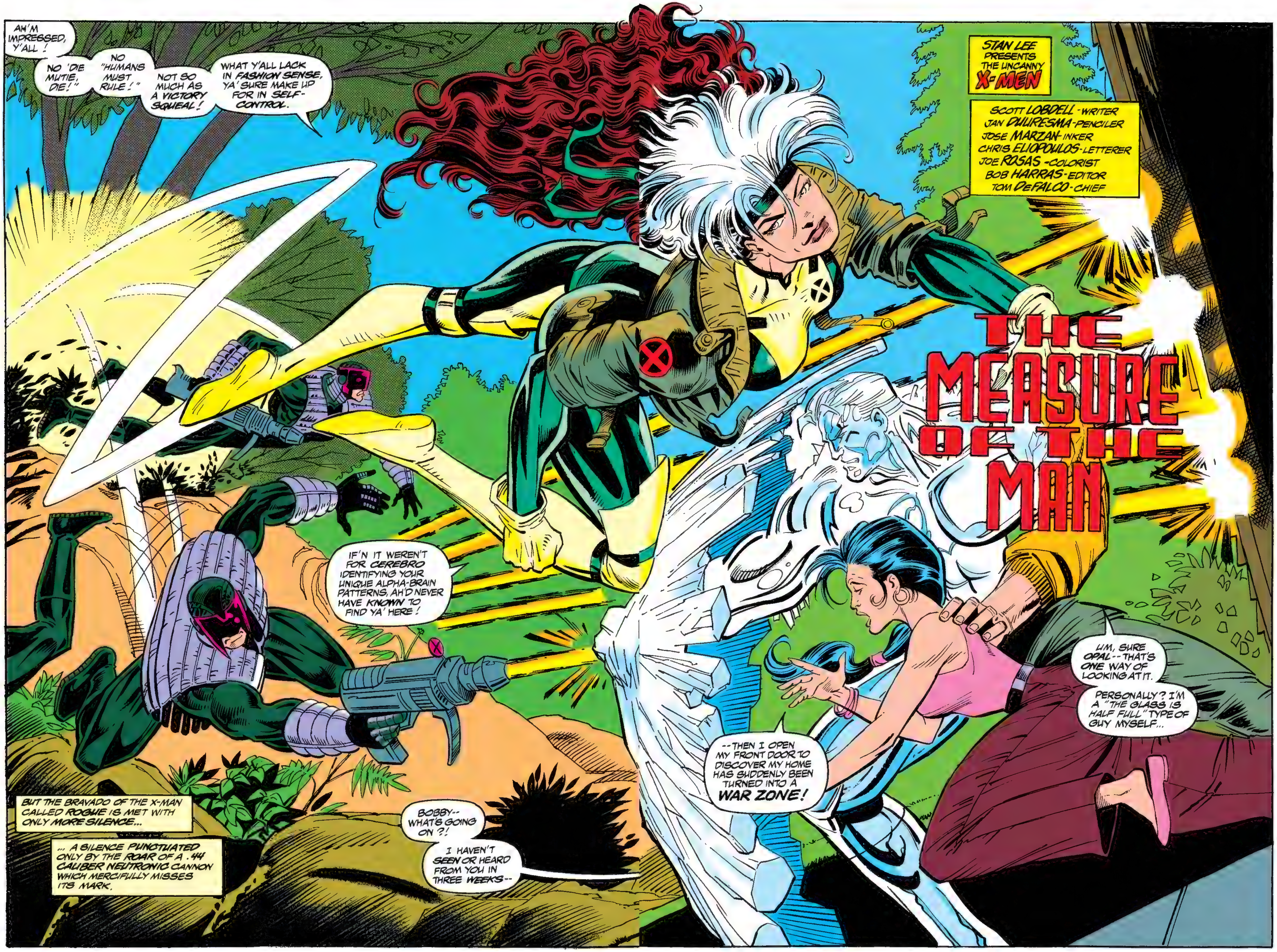
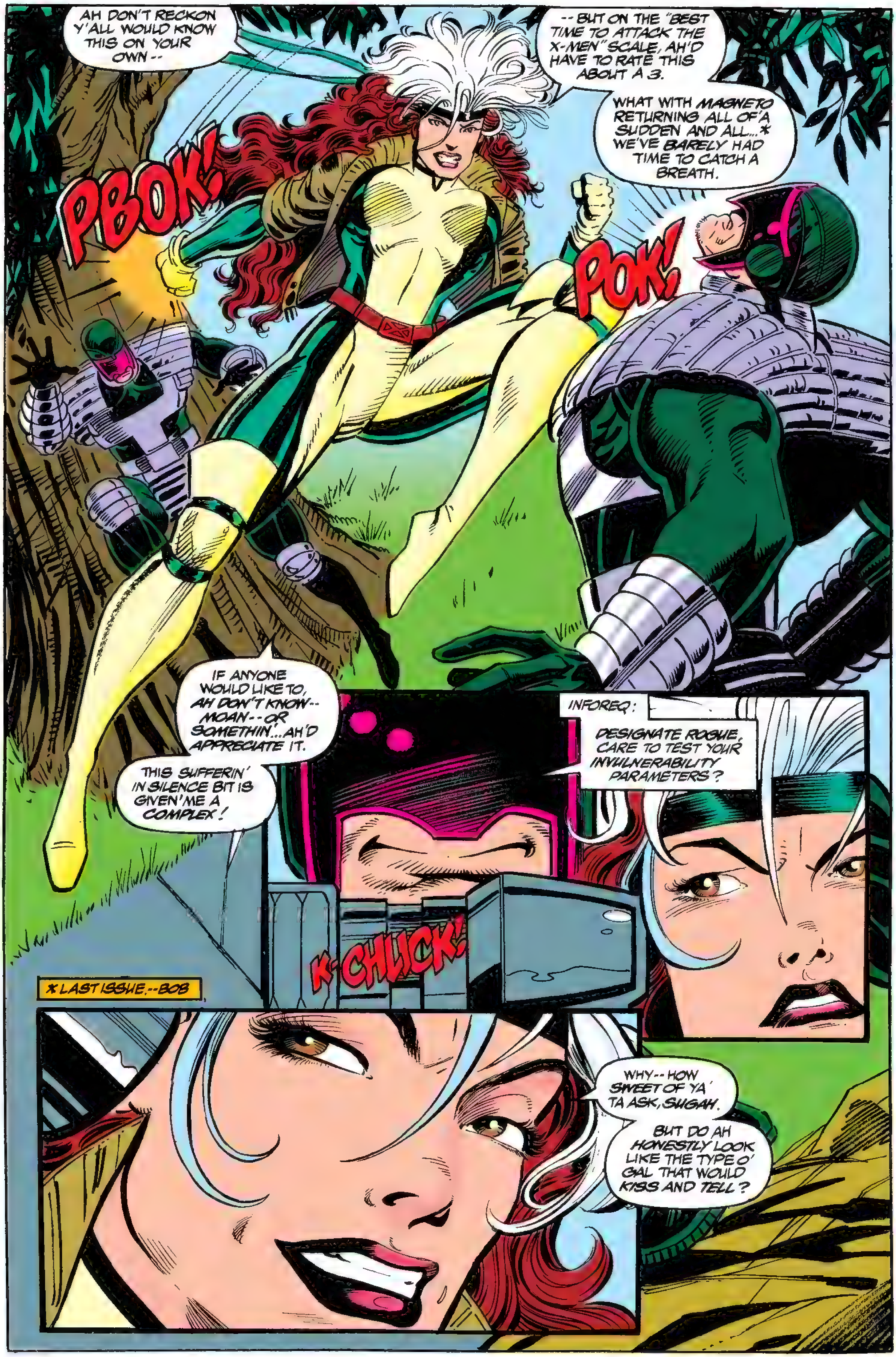
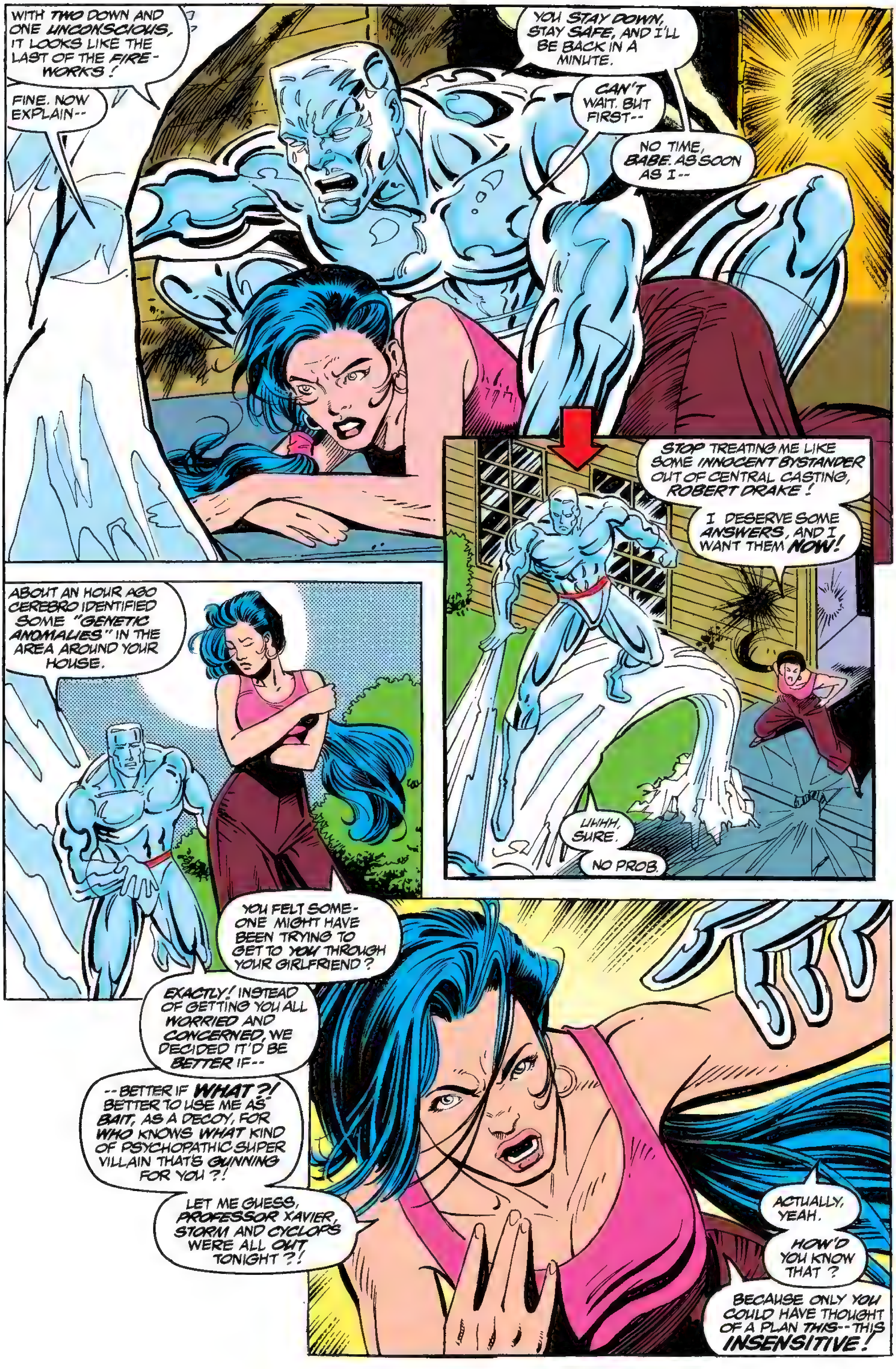
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

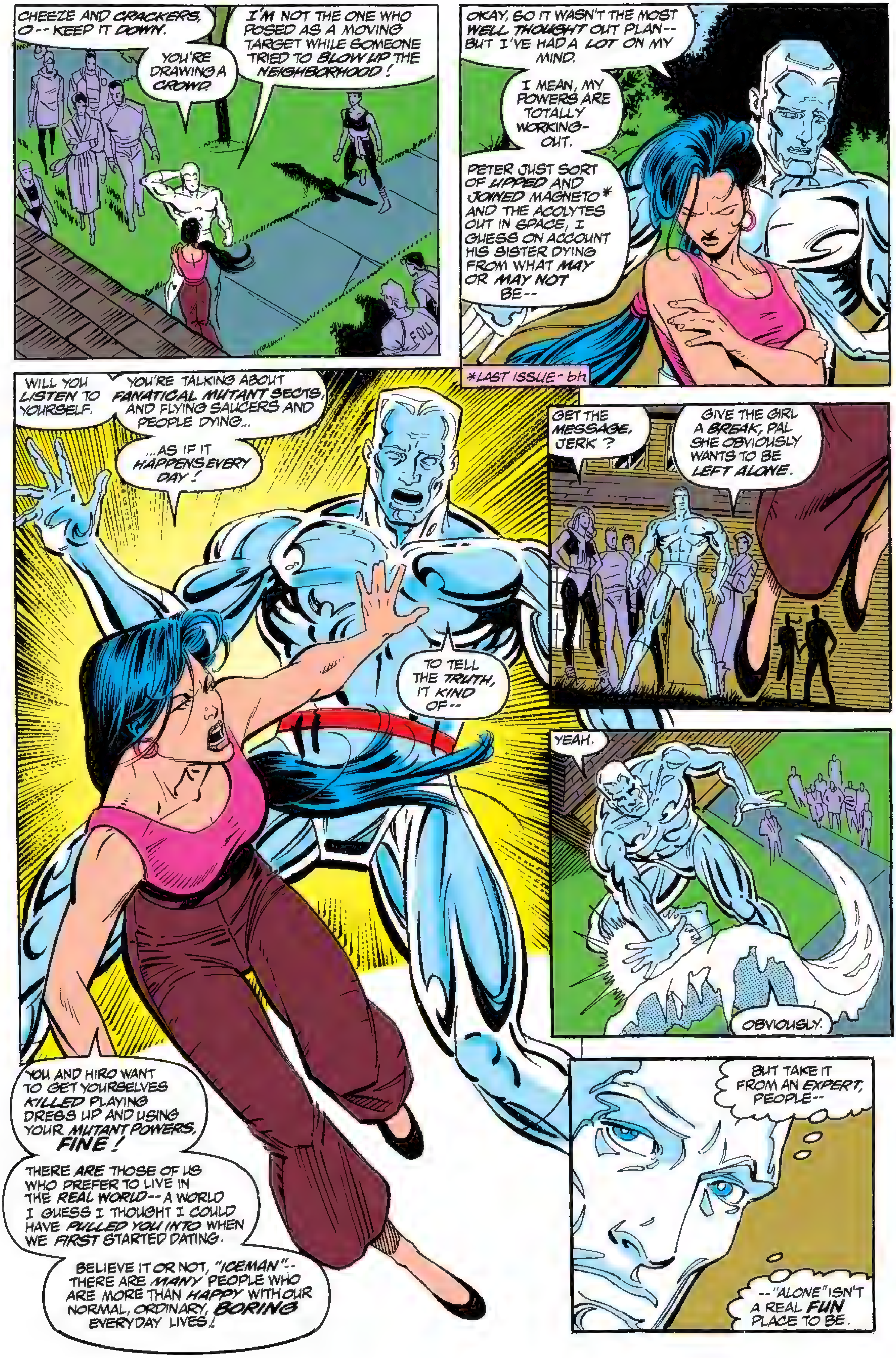

MONTCLAIR, NEW JERSEY, SOMEWHERE...
... A DOG BARKS FOR NO PARTICULAR REASON.
AT THE END OF THE STREET--
--A COUPLE BOTHERED BY THE HEAT OR TOO MANY YEARS OF MARRIAGE ARGUE OVER THE VIRTUES OF HARD COPY VERSUS WHEEL OF FORTUNE.
IRONICALLY THEN, IT IS HERE, ACROSS THE WAY FROM 2745 GRAND COVE ROAD, WHERE SILENCE REIGNS.
IRONIC INDEED...
... FOR IN SOMETHING LESS THAN THREE SECONDS--
--THE ALMOST SURREAL CALM OF THIS SULTRY SUMMER NIGHT IS DESTINED TO BE SHATTERED BY A MURDEROUS ATTACK ON THE X-MAN KNOWN AS ICEMAN.

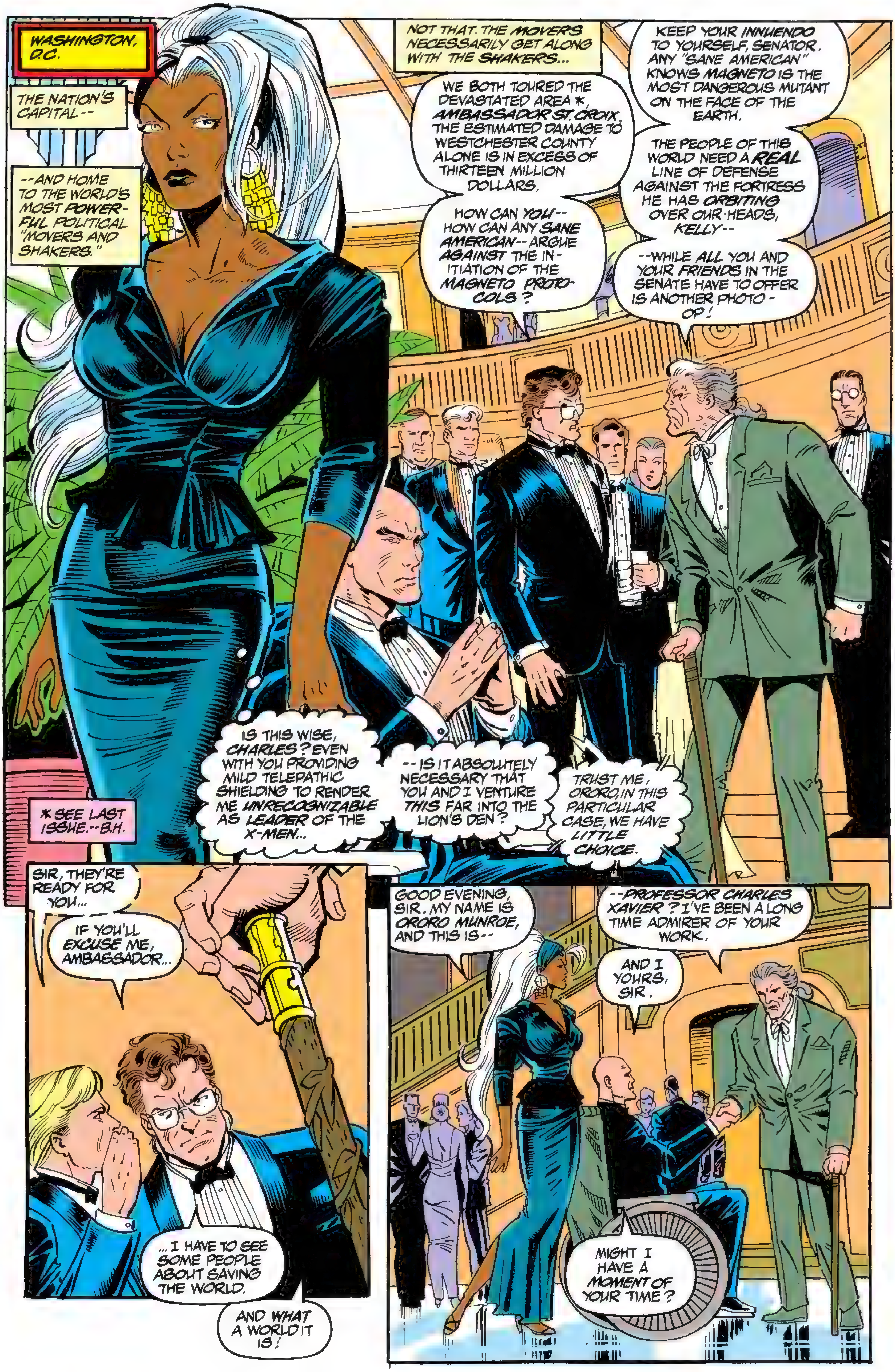

AH'M IMPRESSED, Y'ALL!
NO 'DIE MUTIE, DIE!'
NO "HUMANS MUST RULE!"
NOT SO MUCH AS A VICTORY SQUEAL!
WHAT Y'ALL LACK IN FASHION SENSE, YA' SURE MAKE UP FOR IN SELF-CONTROL.
STAN LEE PRESENTS THE UNCANNY X-MEN
SCOTT LOBDELL - WRITER
JAN DUURESMA - PENCILER
JOSE MARZAN - INKER
CHRIS ELIOPOULOS - LETTERER
JOE ROSAS - COLORIST
BOB HARRAS - EDITOR
TOM DeFALCO - CHIEF
THE MEASURE OF THE MAN
IF'N IT WEREN'T FOR CEREBRO IDENTIFYING YOUR UNIQUE ALPHA-BRAIN PATTERNS, AH'D NEVER HAVE KNOWN TO FIND YA' HERE!
BUT THE BRAVADO OF THE X-MAN CALLED ROGUE IS MET WITH ONLY MORE SILENCE...
... A SILENCE PUNCTUATED ONLY BY THE ROAR OF A .44 CALIBER NEUTRONIC CANNON WHICH MERCIFULLY MISSES ITS MARK.
BOBBY-- WHAT'S GOING ON?!
I HAVEN'T SEEN OR HEARD FROM YOU IN THREE WEEKS--
--THEN I OPEN MY FRONT DOOR TO DISCOVER MY HOME HAS SUDDENLY BEEN TURNED INTO A WAR ZONE!
UM, SURE OPAL-- THAT'S ONE WAY OF LOOKING AT IT.
PERSONALLY? I'M A "THE GLASS IS HALF FULL" TYPE OF GUY MYSELF...

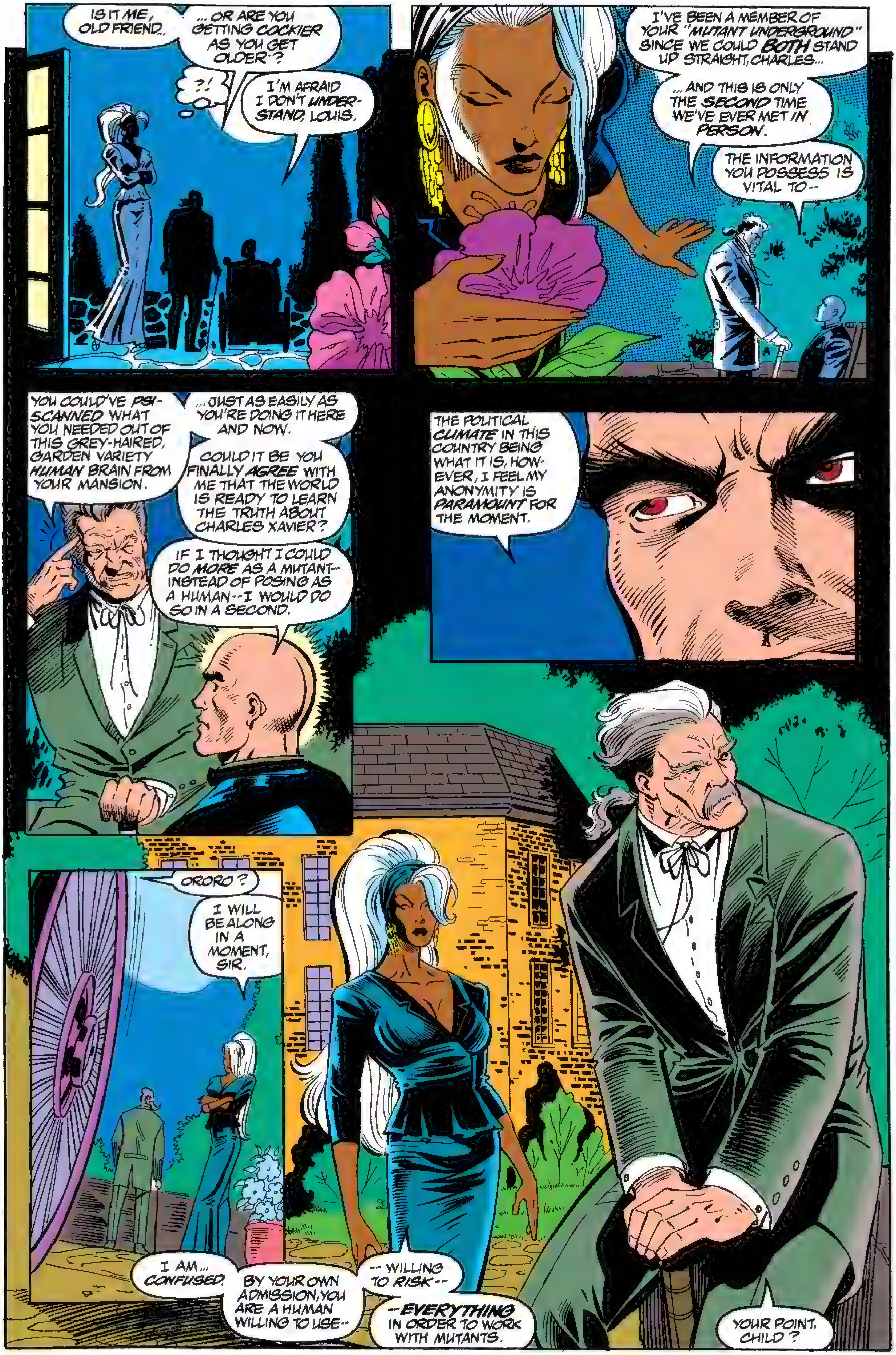

AH DON'T RECKON Y'ALL WOULD KNOW THIS ON YOUR OWN --
-- BUT ON THE "BEST TIME TO ATTACK THE X-MEN" SCALE, AH'D HAVE TO RATE THIS ABOUT A 3.
WHAT WITH MAGNETO RETURNING ALL OF A SUDDEN AND ALL...* WE'VE BARELY HAD TIME TO CATCH A BREATH.
PBOK!
POK!
IF ANYONE WOULD LIKE TO, AH DON'T KNOW-- MOAN--OR SOMETHIN'...AH'D APPRECIATE IT.
THIS SUFFERIN' IN SILENCE BIT IS GIVEN' ME A COMPLEX!
INFOREQ:
DESIGNATE ROGUE, CARE TO TEST YOUR INVULNERABILITY PARAMETERS?
K-CHUCK!
*LAST ISSUE.--BOB
WHY-- HOW SWEET OF YA' TA ASK, SUGAH.
BUT DO AH HONESTLY LOOK LIKE THE TYPE O' GAL THAT WOULD KISS AND TELL?

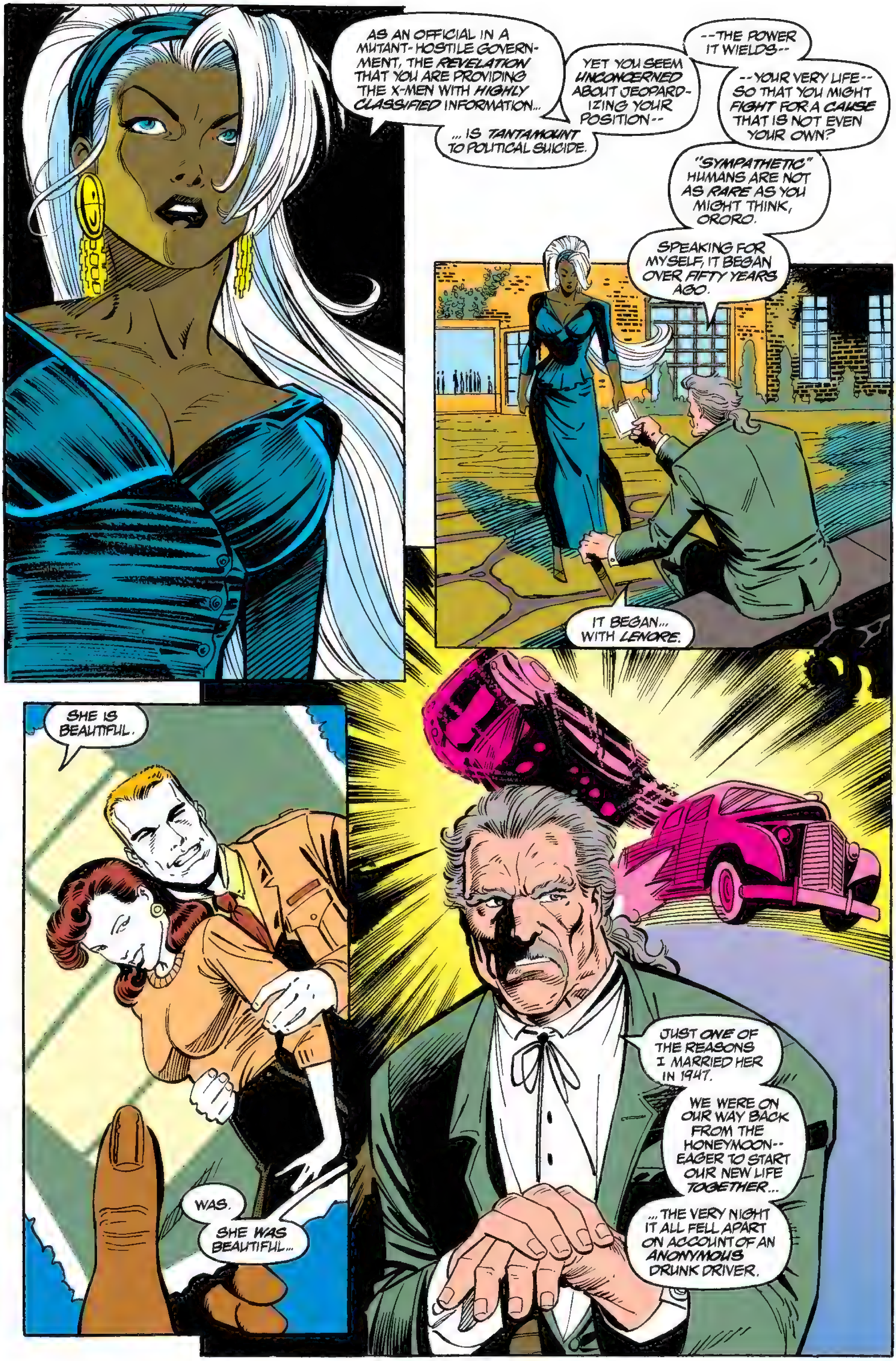
FWBWOASH!
YOUR SECRETS, ROGUE--WOULD APPEAR TO BE SAFE WITH HIM.
CERTAINLY NOW THAT HE'S BEEN REDUCED TO SOME KIND OF BIO-CHEMICAL...OOZE...
...FOR LACK OF A BETTER WORD.
LOOK, AH APPRECIATE A LAST REEL RESCUE AS MUCH AS THE NEXT GIRL, BISHOP--
--BUT DON'T YA' FEEL THAT WAS A TEENY BIT... EXTREME...
...FOR LACK OF A BETTER WORD.
PWWSST
PWWSST
PWWSST
BUT YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. I ONLY USED A FRACTION OF THE BIO-ELECTRIC ABILITY I HAD STORED WITHIN MY BODY.
HE SHOULD HAVE ONLY BEEN RENDERED UNCONSCIOUS!
AS IT IS, HE'S IN NO BETTER CONDITION THAN THE MAN YOU SLAMMED INTO THE TREE.
WHA--?!
YEEAUUCH!
THAT CAIN'T BE RIGHT! LESS'N THEY SELF-DESTRUCTED INSTEAD O' GETTING CAUGHT.
BUT THAT'S CRAZY.. ANYONE WHO'D ATTACK THE X-MEN OUGHTTA' KNOW WE WOULDN'T KILL 'EM!

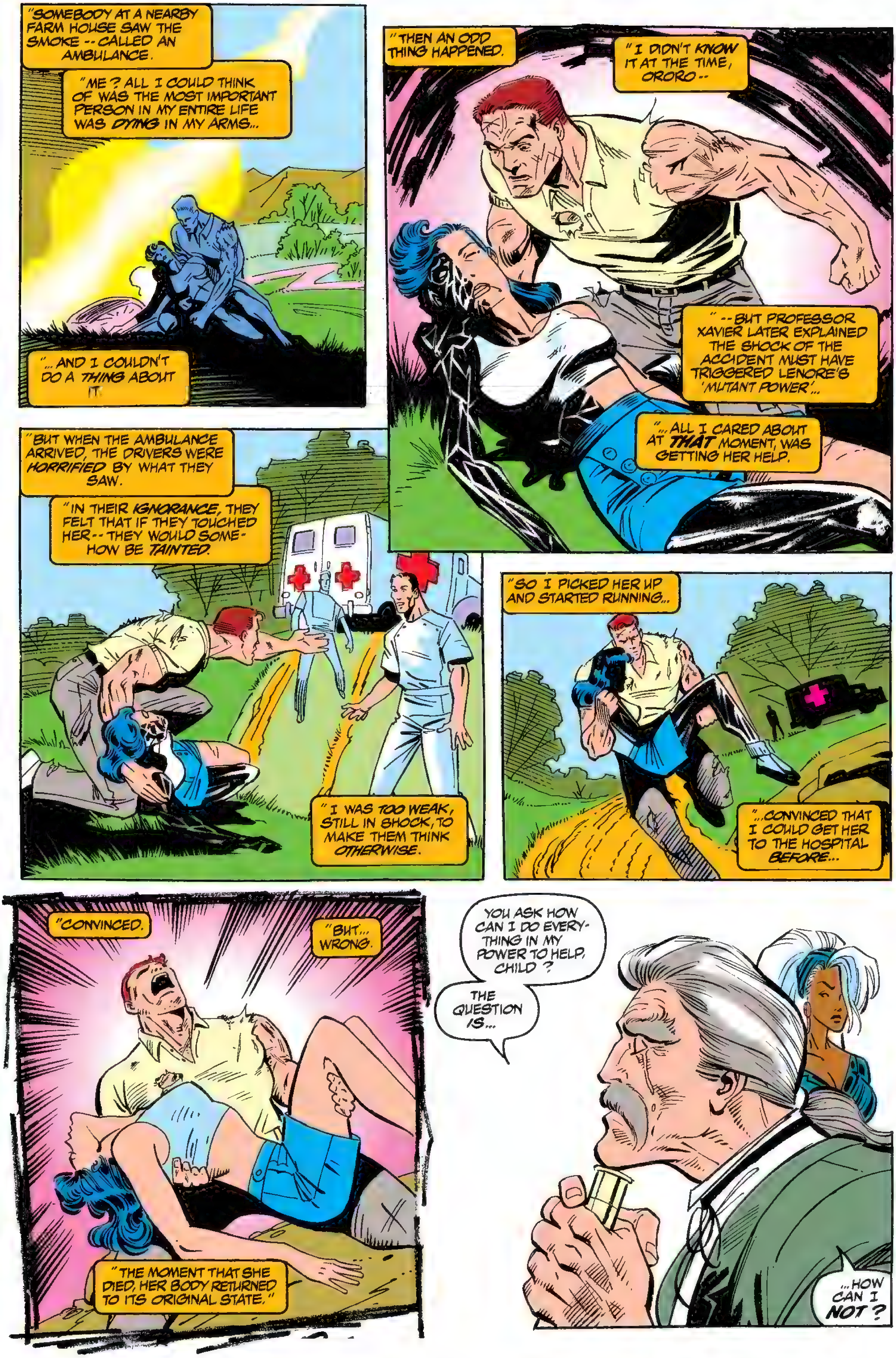

WITH TWO DOWN AND ONE UNCONSCIOUS, IT LOOKS LIKE THE LAST OF THE FIREWORKS!
YOU STAY DOWN, STAY SAFE, AND I'LL BE BACK IN A MINUTE.
FINE. NOW EXPLAIN--
CAN'T WAIT. BUT FIRST--
NO TIME, BABE. AS SOON AS I--
STOP TREATING ME LIKE SOME INNOCENT BYSTANDER OUT OF CENTRAL CASTING, ROBERT DRAKE!
I DESERVE SOME ANSWERS, AND I WANT THEM NOW!
UHHH, SURE.
NO PROB.
ABOUT AN HOUR AGO CEREBRO IDENTIFIED SOME "GENETIC ANOMALIES" IN THE AREA AROUND YOUR HOUSE.
YOU FELT SOMEONE MIGHT HAVE BEEN TRYING TO GET TO YOU THROUGH YOUR GIRLFRIEND?
EXACTLY! INSTEAD OF GETTING YOU ALL WORRIED AND CONCERNED, WE DECIDED IT'D BE BETTER IF--
--BETTER IF WHAT?! BETTER TO USE ME AS BAIT, AS A DECOY, FOR WHO KNOWS WHAT KIND OF PSYCHOPATHIC SUPER VILLAIN THAT'S GUNNING FOR YOU?!
LET ME GUESS, PROFESSOR XAVIER, STORM AND CYCLOPS WERE ALL OUT TONIGHT?!
ACTUALLY, YEAH.
HOW'D YOU KNOW THAT?
BECAUSE ONLY YOU COULD HAVE THOUGHT OF A PLAN THIS--THIS INSENSITIVE!

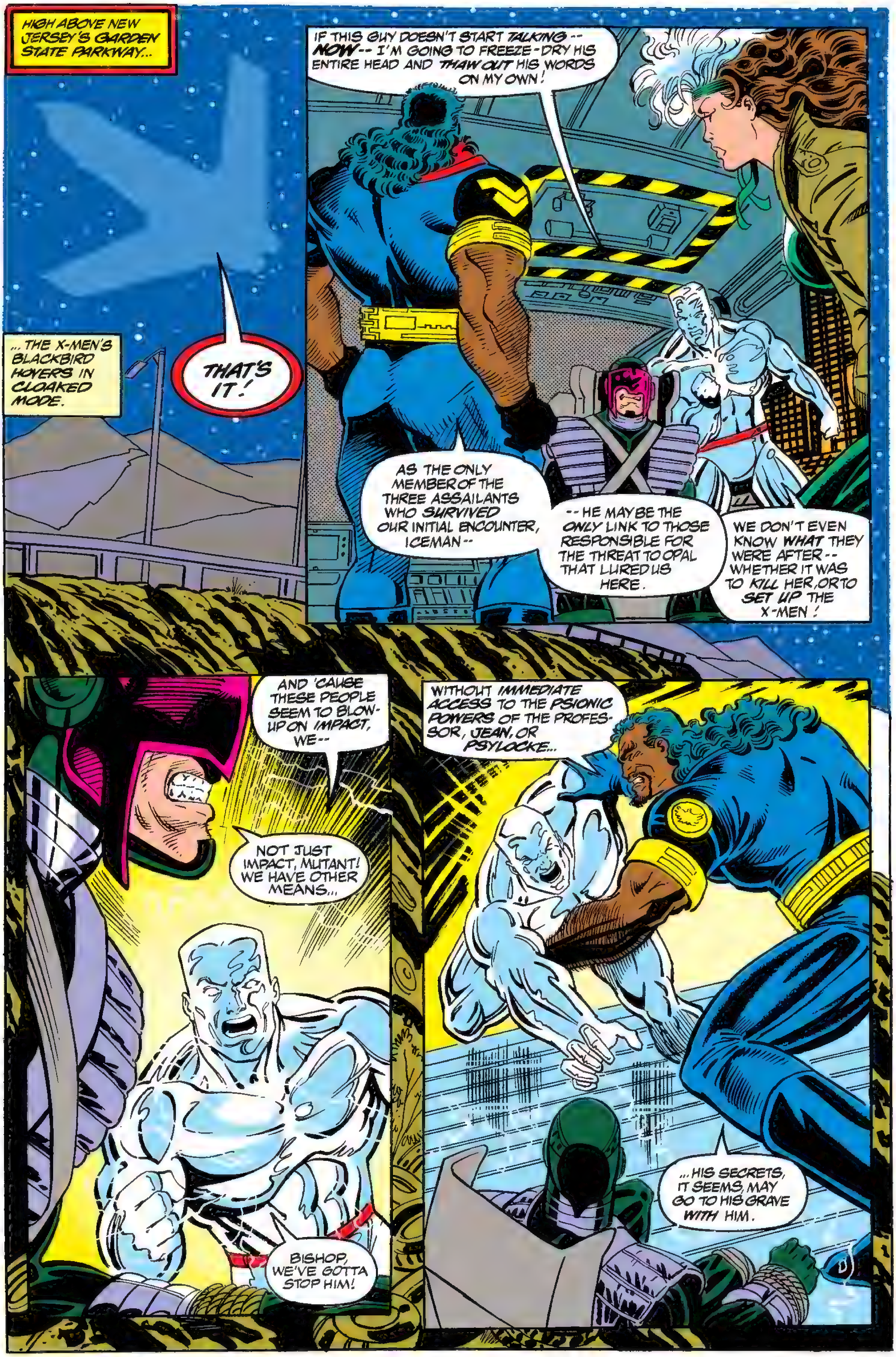

CHEEZE AND CRACKERS, O -- KEEP IT DOWN.
YOU'RE DRAWING A CROWD.
I'M NOT THE ONE WHO POSED AS A MOVING TARGET WHILE SOMEONE TRIED TO BLOW UP THE NEIGHBORHOOD!
FOU
OKAY, SO IT WASN'T THE MOST WELL THOUGHT OUT PLAN -- BUT I'VE HAD A LOT ON MY MIND.
I MEAN, MY POWERS ARE TOTALLY WORKING-OUT.
PETER JUST SORT OF UPPED AND JOINED MAGNETO* AND THE ACOLYTES OUT IN SPACE, I GUESS ON ACCOUNT HIS SISTER DYING FROM WHAT MAY OR MAY NOT BE --
*LAST ISSUE - bh
WILL YOU LISTEN TO YOURSELF.
YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT FANATICAL MUTANT SECTS, AND FLYING SAUCERS AND PEOPLE DYING...
...AS IF IT HAPPENS EVERY DAY!
TO TELL THE TRUTH, IT KIND OF --
YOU AND HIRO WANT TO GET YOURSELVES KILLED PLAYING DRESS UP AND USING YOUR MUTANT POWERS, FINE!
THERE ARE THOSE OF US WHO PREFER TO LIVE IN THE REAL WORLD -- A WORLD I GUESS I THOUGHT I COULD HAVE PULLED YOU INTO WHEN WE FIRST STARTED DATING.
BELIEVE IT OR NOT, "ICEMAN" -- THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE WHO ARE MORE THAN HAPPY WITH OUR NORMAL, ORDINARY, BORING EVERYDAY LIVES!
GET THE MESSAGE, JERK?
GIVE THE GIRL A BREAK, PAL. SHE OBVIOUSLY WANTS TO BE LEFT ALONE.
YEAH.
OBVIOUSLY.
BUT TAKE IT FROM AN EXPERT, PEOPLE --
-- "ALONE" ISN'T A REAL FUN PLACE TO BE.


WASHINGTON, D.C.
THE NATION'S CAPITAL--
--AND HOME TO THE WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL POLITICAL "MOVERS AND SHAKERS."
NOT THAT THE MOVERS NECESSARILY GET ALONG WITH THE SHAKERS...
WE BOTH TOURED THE DEVASTATED AREA *, AMBASSADOR ST. CROIX. THE ESTIMATED DAMAGE TO WESTCHESTER COUNTY ALONE IS IN EXCESS OF THIRTEEN MILLION DOLLARS.
HOW CAN YOU-- HOW CAN ANY SANE AMERICAN-- ARGUE AGAINST THE INITIATION OF THE MAGNETO PROTOCOLS?
KEEP YOUR INNUENDO TO YOURSELF, SENATOR. ANY "SANE AMERICAN" KNOWS MAGNETO IS THE MOST DANGEROUS MUTANT ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH.
THE PEOPLE OF THIS WORLD NEED A REAL LINE OF DEFENSE AGAINST THE FORTRESS HE HAS ORBITING OVER OUR HEADS, KELLY--
--WHILE ALL YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS IN THE SENATE HAVE TO OFFER IS ANOTHER PHOTO-OP!
IS THIS WISE, CHARLES? EVEN WITH YOU PROVIDING MILD TELEPATHIC SHIELDING TO RENDER ME UNRECOGNIZABLE AS LEADER OF THE X-MEN...
--IS IT ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY THAT YOU AND I VENTURE THIS FAR INTO THE LION'S DEN?
TRUST ME, ORORO. IN THIS PARTICULAR CASE, WE HAVE LITTLE CHOICE.
* SEE LAST ISSUE.--B.H.
SIR, THEY'RE READY FOR YOU...
IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, AMBASSADOR...
...I HAVE TO SEE SOME PEOPLE ABOUT SAVING THE WORLD.
AND WHAT A WORLD IT IS!
GOOD EVENING, SIR. MY NAME IS ORORO MUNROE, AND THIS IS--
--PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER? I'VE BEEN A LONG TIME ADMIRER OF YOUR WORK.
AND I YOURS, SIR.
MIGHT I HAVE A MOMENT OF YOUR TIME?


IS IT ME, OLD FRIEND...
...OR ARE YOU GETTING COCKIER AS YOU GET OLDER?
?!
I'M AFRAID I DON'T UNDERSTAND, LOUIS.
I'VE BEEN A MEMBER OF YOUR "MUTANT UNDERGROUND" SINCE WE COULD BOTH STAND UP STRAIGHT, CHARLES...
...AND THIS IS ONLY THE SECOND TIME WE'VE EVER MET IN PERSON.
THE INFORMATION YOU POSSESS IS VITAL TO--
YOU COULD'VE PSI-SCANNED WHAT YOU NEEDED OUT OF THIS GREY-HAIRED, GARDEN VARIETY HUMAN BRAIN FROM YOUR MANSION.
...JUST AS EASILY AS YOU'RE DOING IT HERE AND NOW.
COULD IT BE YOU FINALLY AGREE WITH ME THAT THE WORLD IS READY TO LEARN THE TRUTH ABOUT CHARLES XAVIER?
IF I THOUGHT I COULD DO MORE AS A MUTANT--INSTEAD OF POSING AS A HUMAN--I WOULD DO SO IN A SECOND.
THE POLITICAL CLIMATE IN THIS COUNTRY BEING WHAT IT IS, HOWEVER, I FEEL MY ANONYMITY IS PARAMOUNT FOR THE MOMENT.
ORORO?
I WILL BE ALONG IN A MOMENT, SIR.
I AM... CONFUSED.
BY YOUR OWN ADMISSION, YOU ARE A HUMAN WILLING TO USE--
--WILLING TO RISK--
--EVERYTHING IN ORDER TO WORK WITH MUTANTS.
YOUR POINT, CHILD?

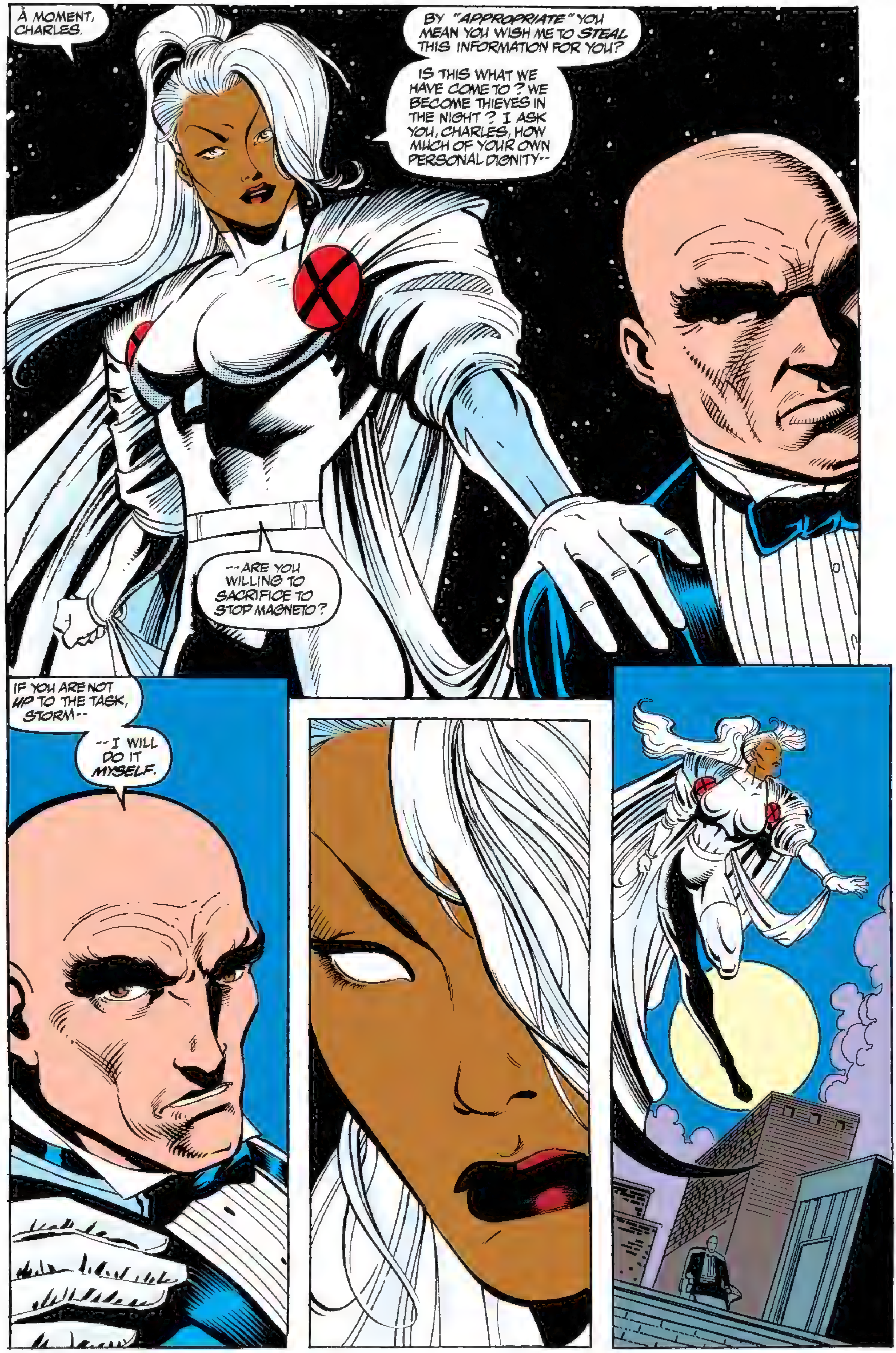

AS AN OFFICIAL IN A MUTANT-HOSTILE GOVERNMENT, THE *REVELATION* THAT YOU ARE PROVIDING THE X-MEN WITH *HIGHLY CLASSIFIED* INFORMATION...
... IS *TANTAMOUNT* TO POLITICAL SUICIDE.
YET YOU SEEM *UNCONCERNED* ABOUT JEOPARDIZING YOUR POSITION--
--THE POWER IT WIELDS--
--YOUR VERY LIFE--SO THAT YOU MIGHT *FIGHT* FOR A *CAUSE* THAT IS NOT EVEN YOUR OWN?
"SYMPATHETIC" HUMANS ARE NOT AS *RARE* AS YOU MIGHT THINK, ORORO.
SPEAKING FOR MYSELF, IT BEGAN OVER *FIFTY YEARS* AGO.
IT BEGAN... WITH *LENORE*.
SHE IS BEAUTIFUL.
WAS.
SHE *WAS* BEAUTIFUL...
JUST *ONE* OF THE REASONS I MARRIED HER IN 1947.
WE WERE ON OUR WAY BACK FROM THE HONEYMOON-- EAGER TO START OUR NEW LIFE *TOGETHER*...
... THE VERY NIGHT IT ALL FELL APART ON ACCOUNT OF AN *ANONYMOUS* DRUNK DRIVER.

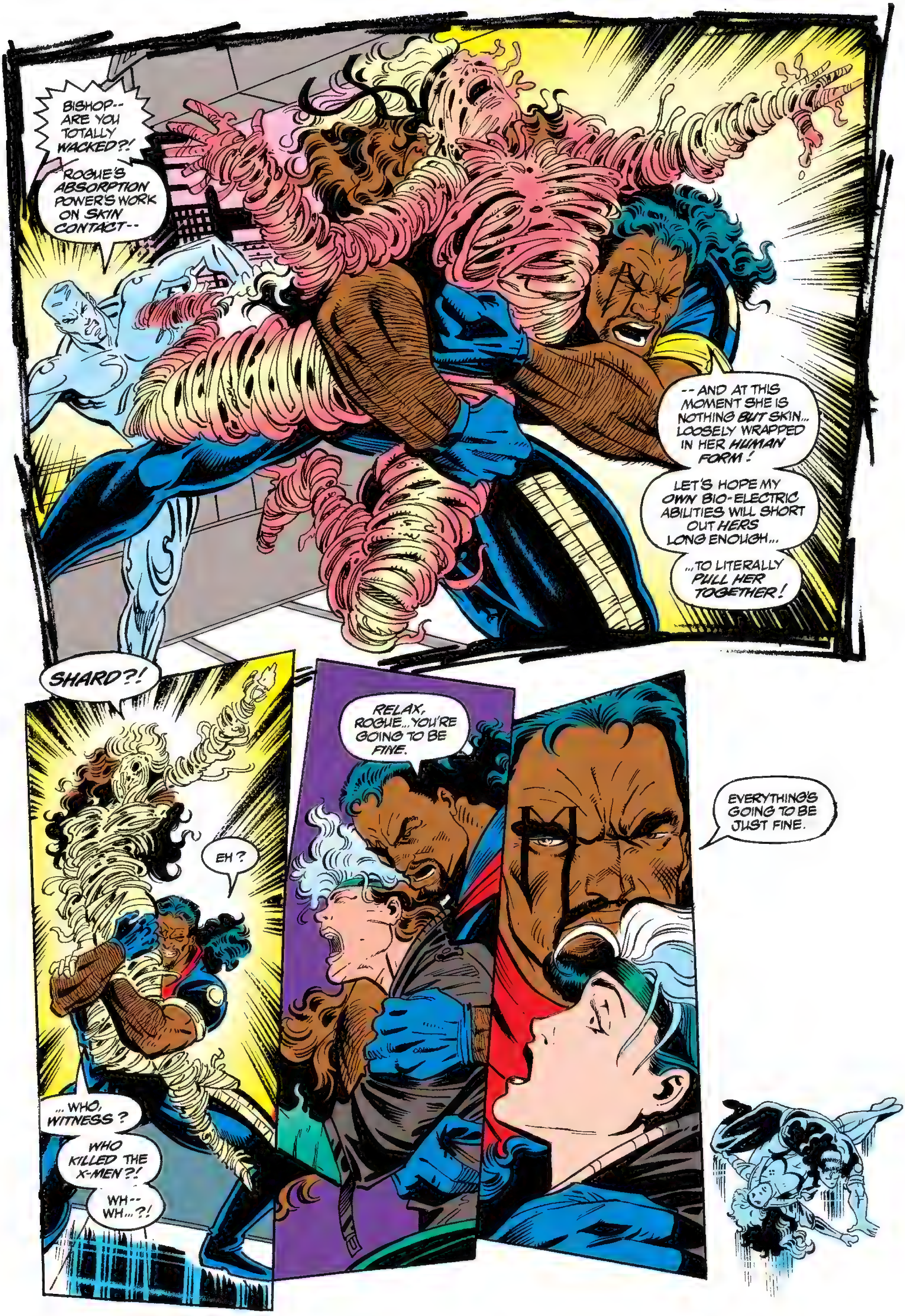

"SOMEBODY AT A NEARBY FARM HOUSE SAW THE SMOKE -- CALLED AN AMBULANCE.
"ME? ALL I COULD THINK OF WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT PERSON IN MY ENTIRE LIFE WAS DYING IN MY ARMS...
"... AND I COULDN'T DO A THING ABOUT IT.
"THEN AN ODD THING HAPPENED.
"I DIDN'T KNOW IT AT THE TIME, ORORO --
" -- BUT PROFESSOR XAVIER LATER EXPLAINED THE SHOCK OF THE ACCIDENT MUST HAVE TRIGGERED LENORE'S 'MUTANT POWER'...
"... ALL I CARED ABOUT AT THAT MOMENT, WAS GETTING HER HELP.
"BUT WHEN THE AMBULANCE ARRIVED, THE DRIVERS WERE HORRIFIED BY WHAT THEY SAW.
"IN THEIR IGNORANCE, THEY FELT THAT IF THEY TOUCHED HER -- THEY WOULD SOMEHOW BE TAINTED.
"I WAS TOO WEAK, STILL IN SHOCK, TO MAKE THEM THINK OTHERWISE.
"SO I PICKED HER UP AND STARTED RUNNING...
"...CONVINCED THAT I COULD GET HER TO THE HOSPITAL BEFORE...
"CONVINCED.
"BUT... WRONG.
"THE MOMENT THAT SHE DIED, HER BODY RETURNED TO ITS ORIGINAL STATE."
YOU ASK HOW CAN I DO EVERYTHING IN MY POWER TO HELP, CHILD?
THE QUESTION IS...
...HOW CAN I NOT?

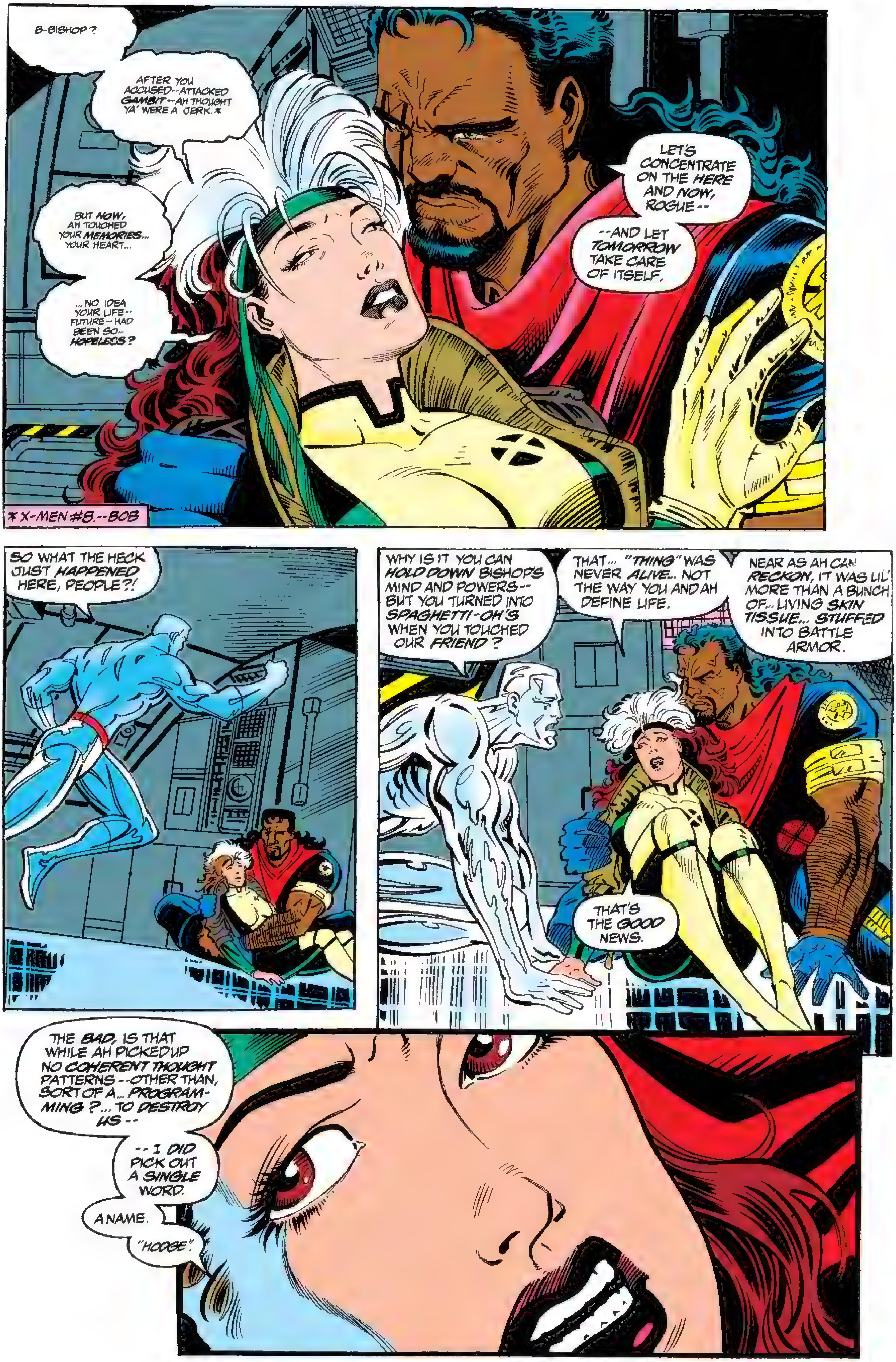

HIGH ABOVE NEW JERSEY'S GARDEN STATE PARKWAY...
...THE X-MEN'S BLACKBIRD HOVERS IN CLOAKED MODE.
THAT'S IT!
IF THIS GUY DOESN'T START TALKING -- NOW -- I'M GOING TO FREEZE-DRY HIS ENTIRE HEAD AND THAW OUT HIS WORDS ON MY OWN!
AS THE ONLY MEMBER OF THE THREE ASSAILANTS WHO SURVIVED OUR INITIAL ENCOUNTER, ICEMAN--
--HE MAY BE THE ONLY LINK TO THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE THREAT TO OPAL THAT LURED US HERE.
WE DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THEY WERE AFTER -- WHETHER IT WAS TO KILL HER, OR TO SET UP THE X-MEN!
AND 'CAUSE THESE PEOPLE SEEM TO BLOW-UP ON IMPACT, WE--
NOT JUST IMPACT, MUTANT! WE HAVE OTHER MEANS...
BISHOP, WE'VE GOTTA STOP HIM!
WITHOUT IMMEDIATE ACCESS TO THE PSIONIC POWERS OF THE PROFESSOR, JEAN, OR PSYLOCKE...
...HIS SECRETS, IT SEEMS, MAY GO TO HIS GRAVE WITH HIM.

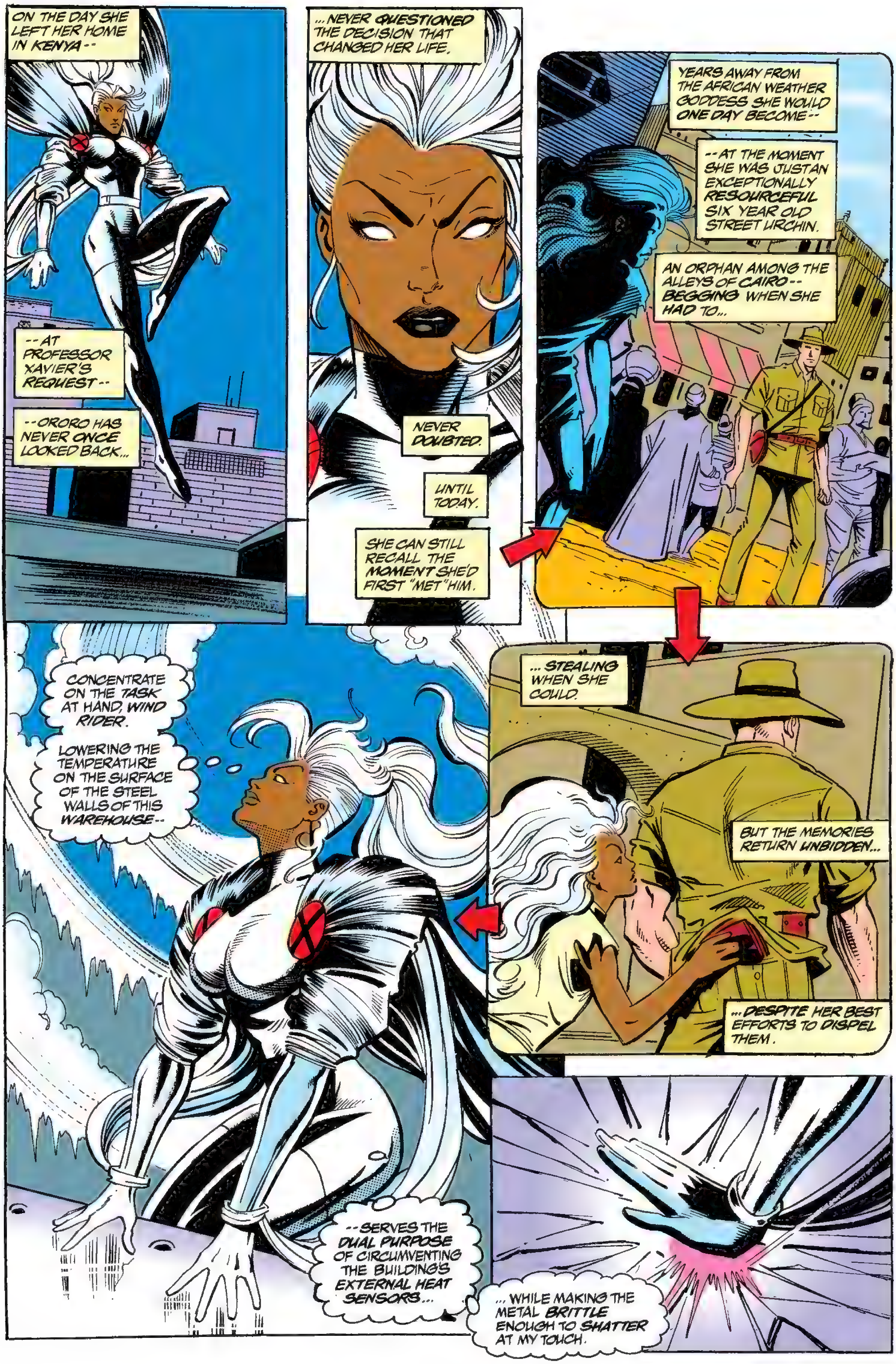
THAT AIN'T TRUE, FELLAS.
WITH MY MUTANT ABILITY TO ABSORB ANOTHER PERSON'S PERSONALITY--
--ONE LIL' TOUCH OUGHT TO BE ENOUGH TO GET US THE INFORMATION WE NEED.
TEP
THE INSTANT IT HAPPENS--
--SHE REALIZES THIS WAS A MISTAKE.
UPON CONTACT, A THOUSAND IMAGES FLOOD HER CONSCIOUSNESS...
...ONLY A HANDFUL OF WHICH ARE VAGUELY HUMAN!
WHILE HER MUTANT BODY TEMPORARILY ALIGNS ITSELF WITH THAT OF THEIR WOULD-BE ASSASSIN--
--A SMILE ON HIS FACE--
--HIS LAUGHTER RINGING IN THE AIR--
--THE MAN SIMPLY... EXPLODES!
BY THE SINGLE EYE...!
ROGUE, ARE YOU--?!
N-NO, BOBBY-- DON'T TOUCH ME!
S-STAY BACK!

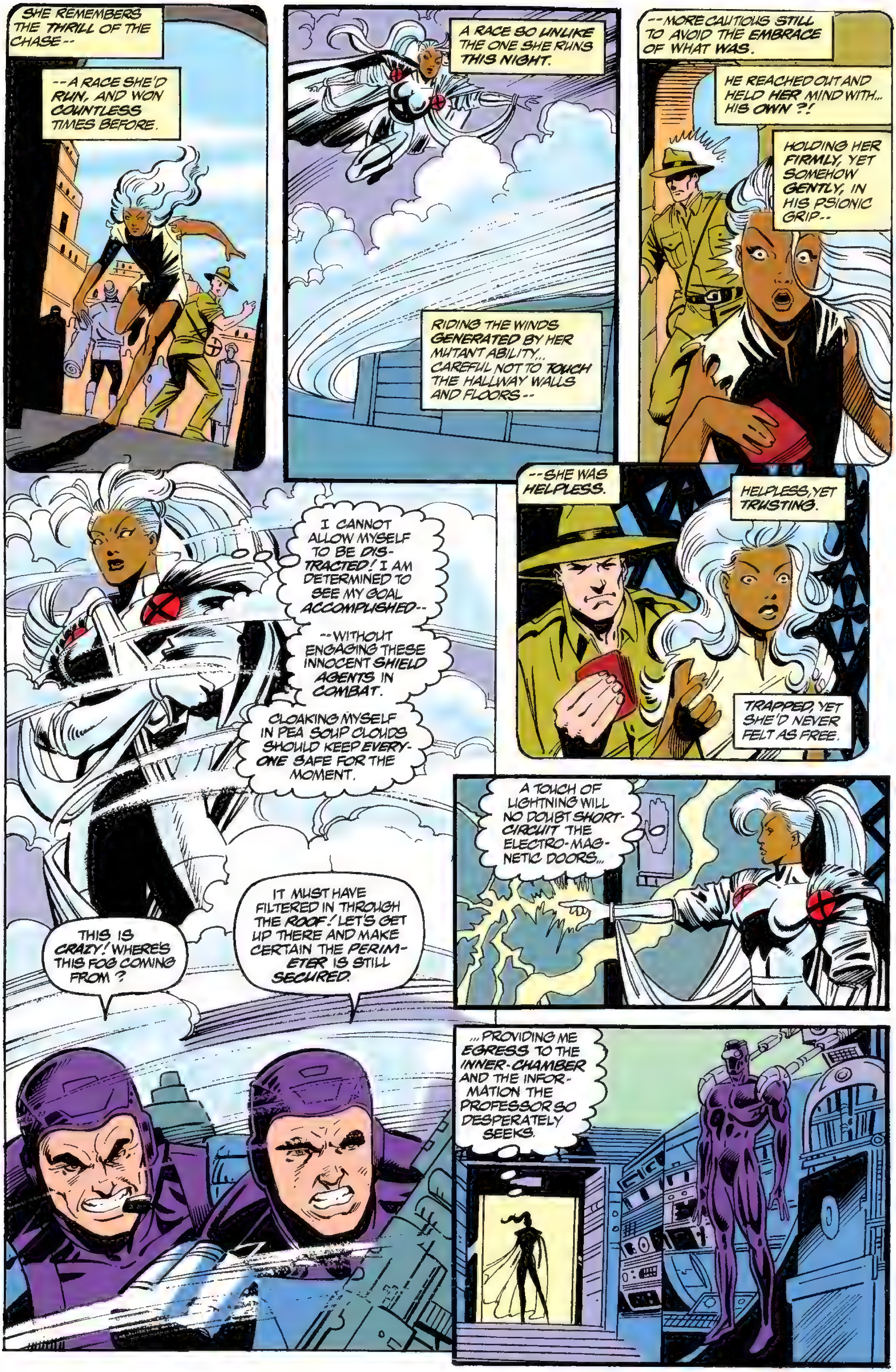
AS THE PAIN RIPPLES THROUGH HER BODY--
--SHE IS UNABLE TO CHOKE OUT THE WORDS-- THE TRUTH OF THE SITUATION TO WHICH SHE IS NOW A LIVING, WRITHING TESTAMENT.
WHEN THE TRIO OF ASSAILANTS WERE ORIGINALLY IDENTIFIED AS "GENETIC ANOMALIES," THE ONLY POSITIVE VERIFICATION CEREBRO COULD MAKE--
--WAS THAT THEY WERE NOT "MUTANTS" IN THE CLASSICAL SENSE.
DRAPED AS THEY WERE IN UNIDENTIFIED UNIFORMS, HOWEVER, IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON BENEATH THEIR BATTLE-SUITS.
...MUCH TO HER REGRET.
"IMPOSSIBLE," THAT IS, UNTIL ROGUE BEGAN TO MIRROR THE EFFECTS OF THE BODIES BENEATH THE COSTUMES...
MEANWHILE...
...IN THE WAREHOUSE DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON...
ACCORDING TO ST. CROIX'S CONNECTIONS, SEVERAL WEEKS AGO, AN ATTEMPT ON MAGNETO'S LIFE FAILED.*
APPARENTLY, A MULTI-NATIONAL TASK FORCE MANAGED TO CREATE AN EXO-SKELETON CAPABLE OF CLOAKING AN INDIVIDUAL FROM MAGNUS'S ELECTRO-MAGNETIC SPHERE OF AWARENESS.
TOMORROW, THAT SUIT WILL BE SENT TO BELGIUM TO BE DUPLICATED BY THE EUROPEANS.
I WANT IT NOW-- SO THAT FORGE MIGHT ADAPT CERTAIN ASPECTS OF IT WHICH WILL SERVE OUR NEEDS IN THE DAYS TO COME.
I NEED YOU TO APPROPRIATE IT FOR US.
*SEE X-MEN UNLIMITED #2.--BOB

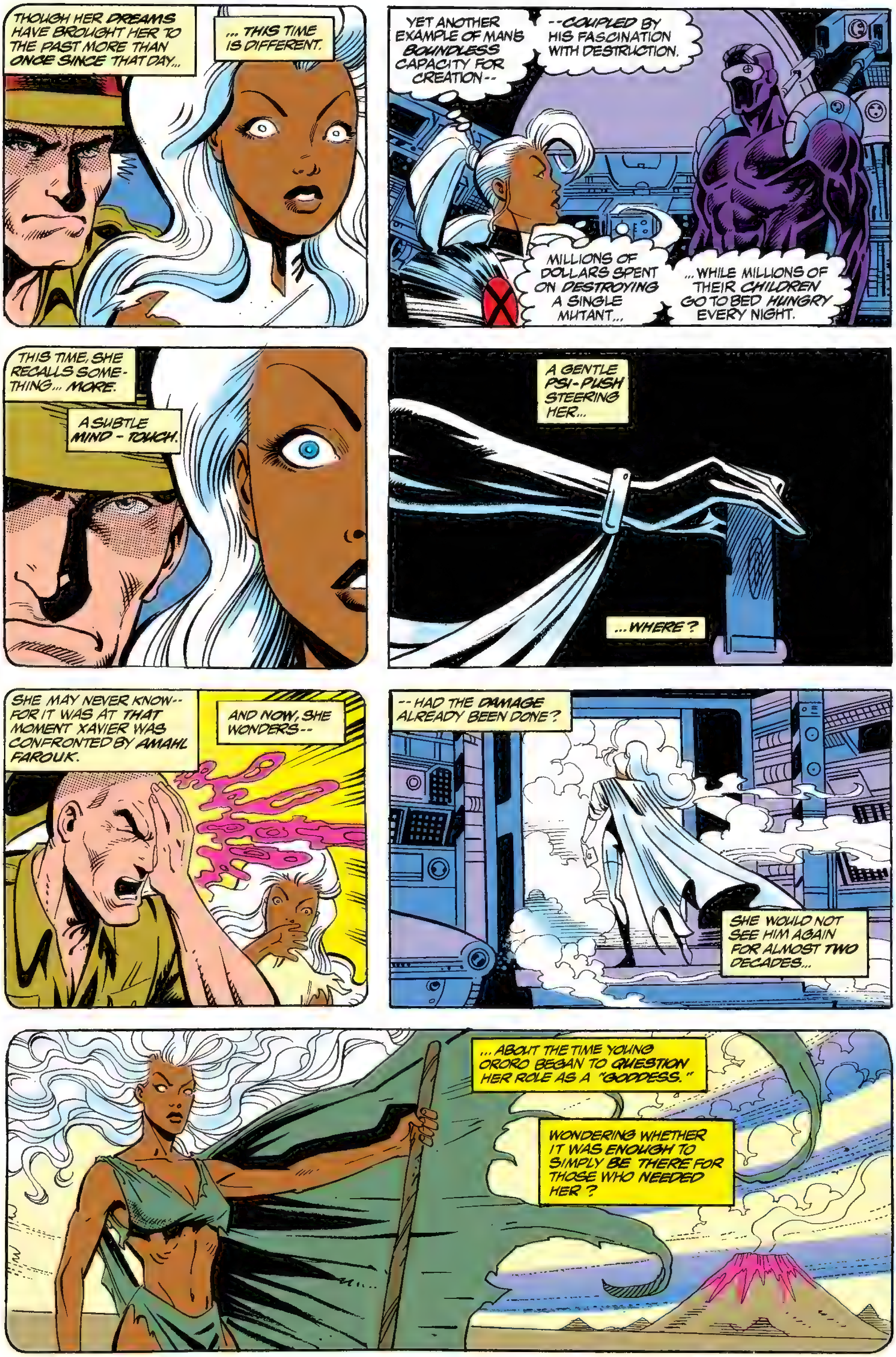

À MOMENT, CHARLES.
BY "APPROPRIATE" YOU MEAN YOU WISH ME TO STEAL THIS INFORMATION FOR YOU?
IS THIS WHAT WE HAVE COME TO? WE BECOME THIEVES IN THE NIGHT? I ASK YOU, CHARLES, HOW MUCH OF YOUR OWN PERSONAL DIGNITY--
--ARE YOU WILLING TO SACRIFICE TO STOP MAGNETO?
IF YOU ARE NOT UP TO THE TASK, STORM--
--I WILL DO IT MYSELF.

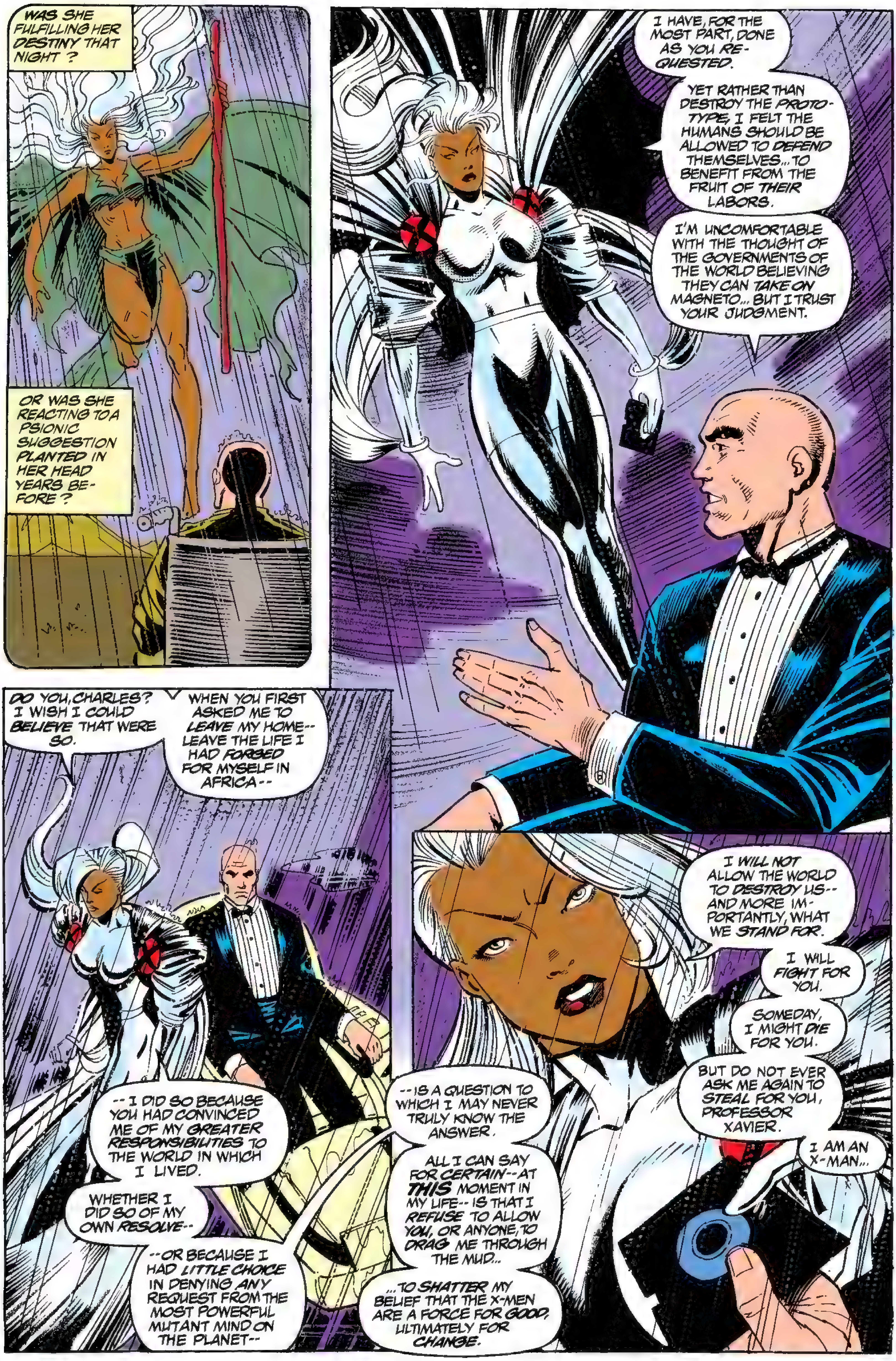

BISHOP-- ARE YOU TOTALLY WACKED?!
ROGUE'S ABSORPTION POWER'S WORK ON SKIN CONTACT--
--AND AT THIS MOMENT SHE IS NOTHING BUT SKIN... LOOSELY WRAPPED IN HER HUMAN FORM!
LET'S HOPE MY OWN BIO-ELECTRIC ABILITIES WILL SHORT OUT HERS LONG ENOUGH...
...TO LITERALLY PULL HER TOGETHER!
SHARD?!
EH?
...WHO, WITNESS?
WHO KILLED THE X-MEN?!
WH-- WH...?!
RELAX, ROGUE... YOU'RE GOING TO BE FINE.
EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE JUST FINE.

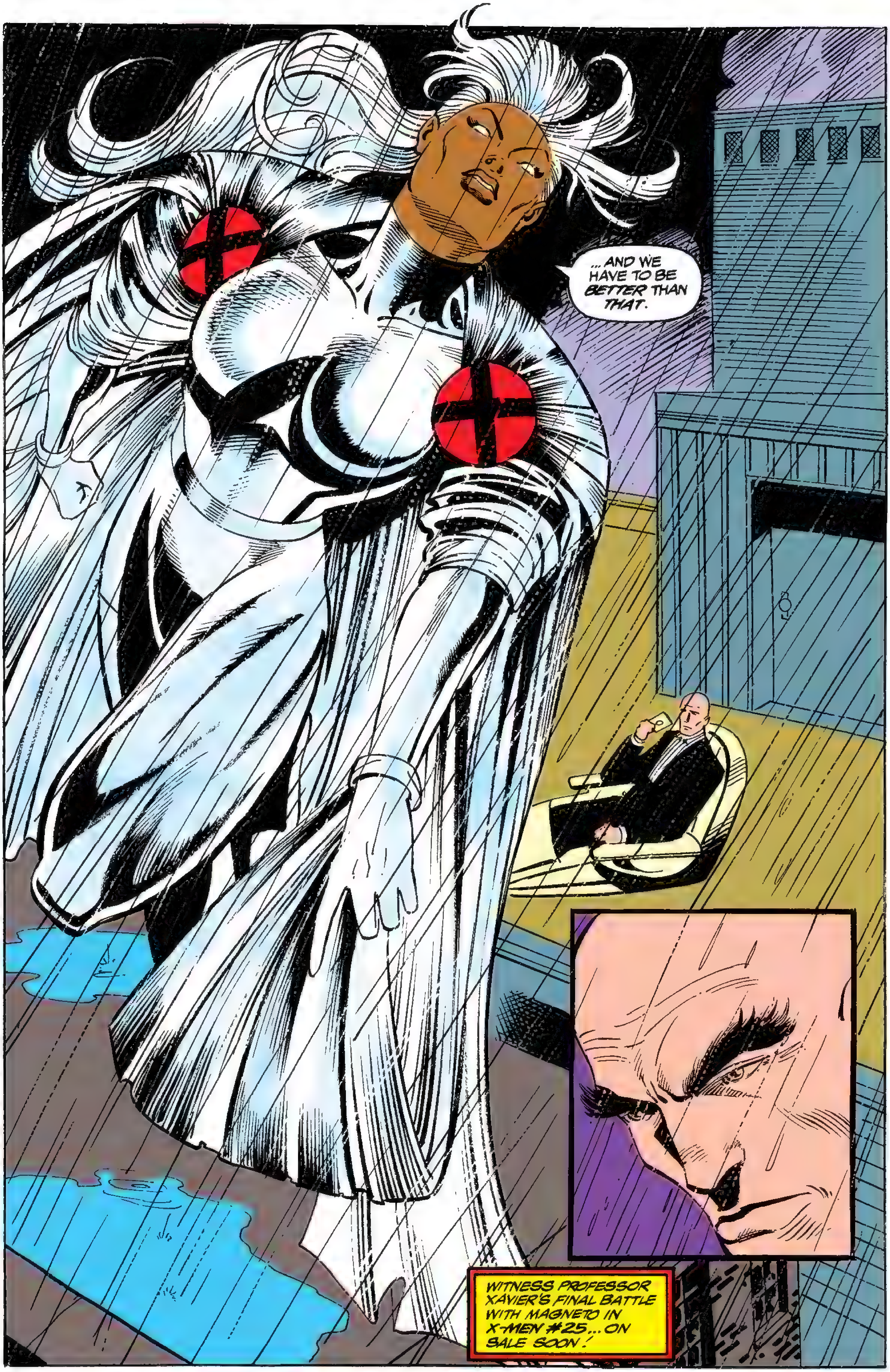

B-BISHOP?
AFTER YOU ACCUSED--ATTACKED GAMBIT--AH THOUGHT YA' WERE A JERK.*
BUT NOW, AH TOUCHED YOUR MEMORIES... YOUR HEART...
...NO IDEA YOUR LIFE--FUTURE--HAD BEEN SO... HOPELESS?
LET'S CONCENTRATE ON THE HERE AND NOW, ROGUE--
--AND LET TOMORROW TAKE CARE OF ITSELF.
*X-MEN #8.--BOB
SO WHAT THE HECK JUST HAPPENED HERE, PEOPLE?!
WHY IS IT YOU CAN HOLD DOWN BISHOP'S MIND AND POWERS--BUT YOU TURNED INTO SPAGHETTI-OH'S WHEN YOU TOUCHED OUR FRIEND?
THAT... "THING" WAS NEVER ALIVE... NOT THE WAY YOU AND AH DEFINE LIFE.
NEAR AS AH CAN RECKON, IT WAS LIL' MORE THAN A BUNCH OF... LIVING SKIN TISSUE... STUFFED INTO BATTLE ARMOR.
THAT'S THE GOOD NEWS.
THE BAD, IS THAT WHILE AH PICKED UP NO COHERENT THOUGHT PATTERNS--OTHER THAN, SORT OF A... PROGRAMMING?... TO DESTROY US--
--I DID PICK OUT A SINGLE WORD.
A NAME.
"HODGE".

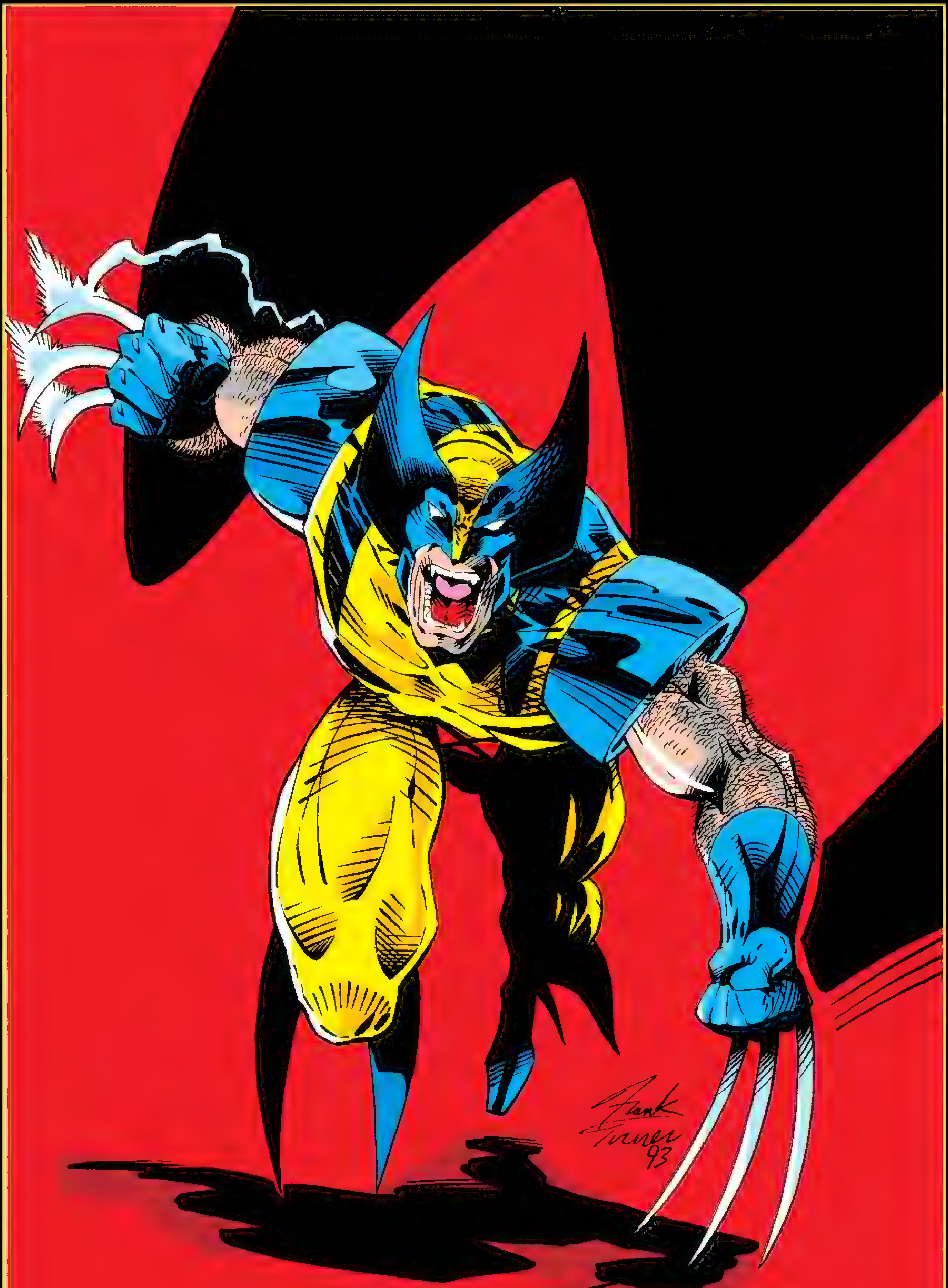

ON THE DAY SHE LEFT HER HOME IN KENYA--
--AT PROFESSOR XAVIER'S REQUEST--
--ORORO HAS NEVER ONCE LOOKED BACK...
...NEVER QUESTIONED THE DECISION THAT CHANGED HER LIFE.
NEVER DOUBTED.
UNTIL TODAY.
SHE CAN STILL RECALL THE MOMENT SHE'D FIRST "MET" HIM.
YEARS AWAY FROM THE AFRICAN WEATHER GODDESS SHE WOULD ONE DAY BECOME--
--AT THE MOMENT SHE WAS JUST AN EXCEPTIONALLY RESOURCEFUL SIX YEAR OLD STREET URCHIN.
AN ORPHAN AMONG THE ALLEYS OF CAIRO--BEGGING WHEN SHE HAD TO...
...STEALING WHEN SHE COULD.
BUT THE MEMORIES RETURN UNBIDDEN...
...DESPITE HER BEST EFFORTS TO DISPEL THEM.
CONCENTRATE ON THE TASK AT HAND, WIND RIDER.
LOWERING THE TEMPERATURE ON THE SURFACE OF THE STEEL WALLS OF THIS WAREHOUSE--
--SERVES THE DUAL PURPOSE OF CIRCUMVENTING THE BUILDING'S EXTERNAL HEAT SENSORS...
...WHILE MAKING THE METAL BRITTLE ENOUGH TO SHATTER AT MY TOUCH.


SHE REMEMBERS THE THRILL OF THE CHASE--
--A RACE SHE'D RUN, AND WON COUNTLESS TIMES BEFORE.
A RACE SO UNLIKE THE ONE SHE RUNS THIS NIGHT.
RIDING THE WINDS GENERATED BY HER MUTANT ABILITY... CAREFUL NOT TO TOUCH THE HALLWAY WALLS AND FLOORS--
--MORE CAUTIOUS STILL TO AVOID THE EMBRACE OF WHAT WAS.
HE REACHED OUT AND HELD HER MIND WITH... HIS OWN?!
HOLDING HER FIRMLY, YET SOMEHOW GENTLY, IN HIS PSIONIC GRIP--
I CANNOT ALLOW MYSELF TO BE DISTRACTED! I AM DETERMINED TO SEE MY GOAL ACCOMPLISHED--
--WITHOUT ENGAGING THESE INNOCENT SHIELD AGENTS IN COMBAT.
CLOAKING MYSELF IN PEA SOUP CLOUDS SHOULD KEEP EVERYONE SAFE FOR THE MOMENT.
--SHE WAS HELPLESS.
HELPLESS, YET TRUSTING.
TRAPPED, YET SHE'D NEVER FELT AS FREE.
A TOUCH OF LIGHTNING WILL NO DOUBT SHORT-CIRCUIT THE ELECTRO-MAGNETIC DOORS...
THIS IS CRAZY! WHERE'S THIS FOG COMING FROM?
IT MUST HAVE FILTERED IN THROUGH THE ROOF! LET'S GET UP THERE AND MAKE CERTAIN THE PERIMETER IS STILL SECURED.
...PROVIDING ME EGRESS TO THE INNER-CHAMBER AND THE INFORMATION THE PROFESSOR SO DESPERATELY SEEKS.


THOUGH HER DREAMS HAVE BROUGHT HER TO THE PAST MORE THAN ONCE SINCE THAT DAY...
... THIS TIME IS DIFFERENT.
YET ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF MAN'S BOUNDLESS CAPACITY FOR CREATION--
--COUPLED BY HIS FASCINATION WITH DESTRUCTION.
MILLIONS OF DOLLARS SPENT ON DESTROYING A SINGLE MUTANT...
...WHILE MILLIONS OF THEIR CHILDREN GO TO BED HUNGRY EVERY NIGHT.
THIS TIME, SHE RECALLS SOMETHING... MORE.
A SUBTLE MIND - TOUCH.
A GENTLE PSI-PUSH STEERING HER...
...WHERE?
SHE MAY NEVER KNOW-- FOR IT WAS AT THAT MOMENT XAVIER WAS CONFRONTED BY AMAHL FAROUK.
AND NOW, SHE WONDERS--
--HAD THE DAMAGE ALREADY BEEN DONE?
SHE WOULD NOT SEE HIM AGAIN FOR ALMOST TWO DECADES...
...ABOUT THE TIME YOUNG ORORO BEGAN TO QUESTION HER ROLE AS A "GODDESS."
WONDERING WHETHER IT WAS ENOUGH TO SIMPLY BE THERE FOR THOSE WHO NEEDED HER?


WAS SHE FULFILLING HER DESTINY THAT NIGHT ?
OR WAS SHE REACTING TO A PSIONIC SUGGESTION PLANTED IN HER HEAD YEARS BEFORE ?
I HAVE, FOR THE MOST PART, DONE AS YOU REQUESTED.
YET RATHER THAN DESTROY THE PROTOTYPE, I FELT THE HUMANS SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO DEFEND THEMSELVES... TO BENEFIT FROM THE FRUIT OF THEIR LABORS.
I'M UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THE THOUGHT OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE WORLD BELIEVING THEY CAN TAKE ON MAGNETO... BUT I TRUST YOUR JUDGMENT.
DO YOU, CHARLES? I WISH I COULD BELIEVE THAT WERE SO.
WHEN YOU FIRST ASKED ME TO LEAVE MY HOME-- LEAVE THE LIFE I HAD FORGED FOR MYSELF IN AFRICA--
--I DID SO BECAUSE YOU HAD CONVINCED ME OF MY GREATER RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE WORLD IN WHICH I LIVED.
WHETHER I DID SO OF MY OWN RESOLVE--
--OR BECAUSE I HAD LITTLE CHOICE IN DENYING ANY REQUEST FROM THE MOST POWERFUL MUTANT MIND ON THE PLANET--
--IS A QUESTION TO WHICH I MAY NEVER TRULY KNOW THE ANSWER.
ALL I CAN SAY FOR CERTAIN--AT THIS MOMENT IN MY LIFE-- IS THAT I REFUSE TO ALLOW YOU, OR ANYONE, TO DRAG ME THROUGH THE MUD...
...TO SHATTER MY BELIEF THAT THE X-MEN ARE A FORCE FOR GOOD, ULTIMATELY FOR CHANGE.
I WILL NOT ALLOW THE WORLD TO DESTROY US-- AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHAT WE STAND FOR.
I WILL FIGHT FOR YOU.
SOMEDAY, I MIGHT DIE FOR YOU.
BUT DO NOT EVER ASK ME AGAIN TO STEAL FOR YOU, PROFESSOR XAVIER.
I AM AN X-MAN...


...AND WE HAVE TO BE *BETTER* THAN THAT.
WITNESS PROFESSOR XAVIER'S FINAL BATTLE WITH MAGNETO IN X-MEN #25...ON SALE SOON!


Frank Turner 93

MARVEL SUPER-HEROES #15 PINUP BY FRANK TURNER

MARVEL COMICS
THE UNCANNY
X-MEN
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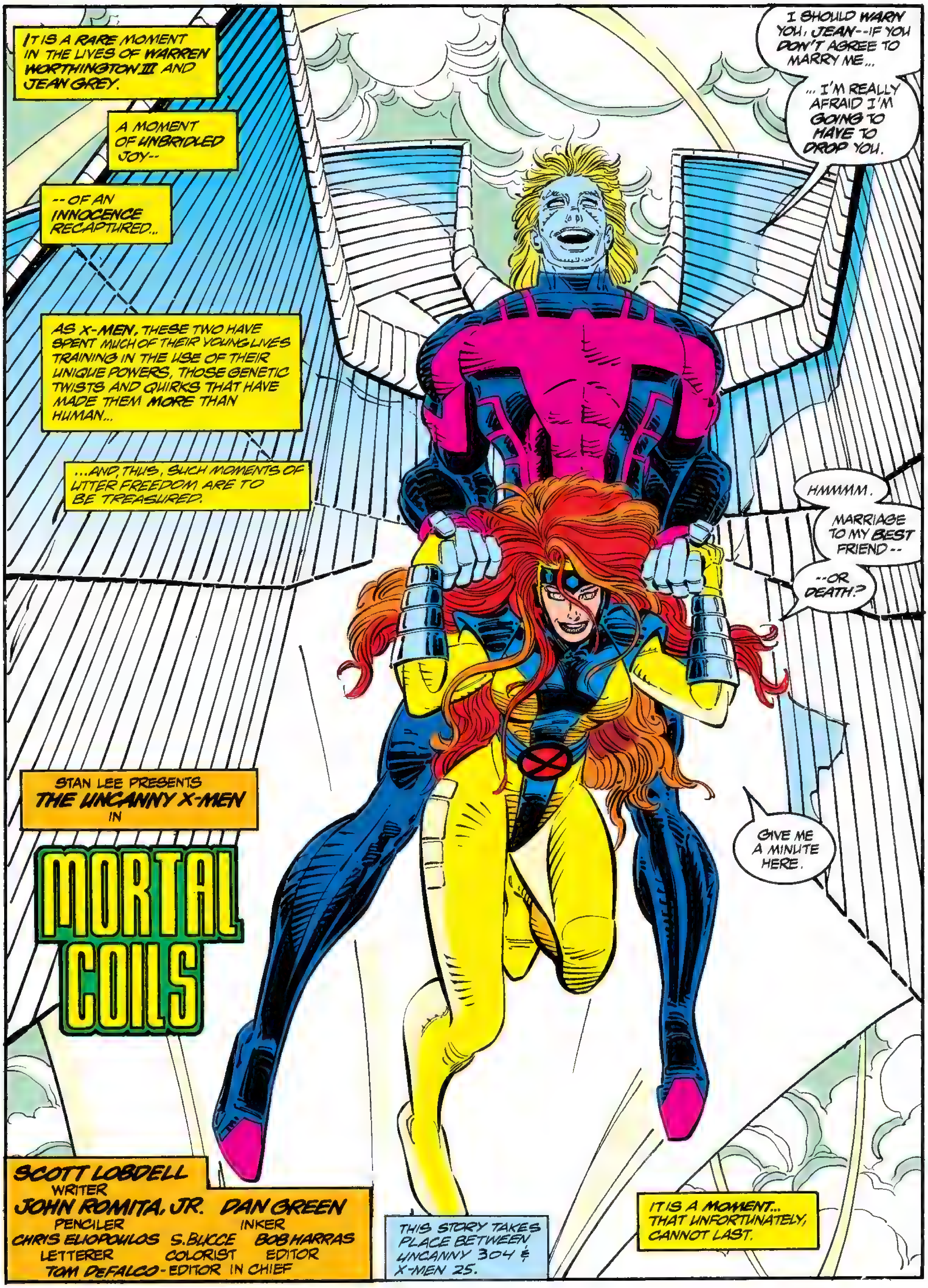
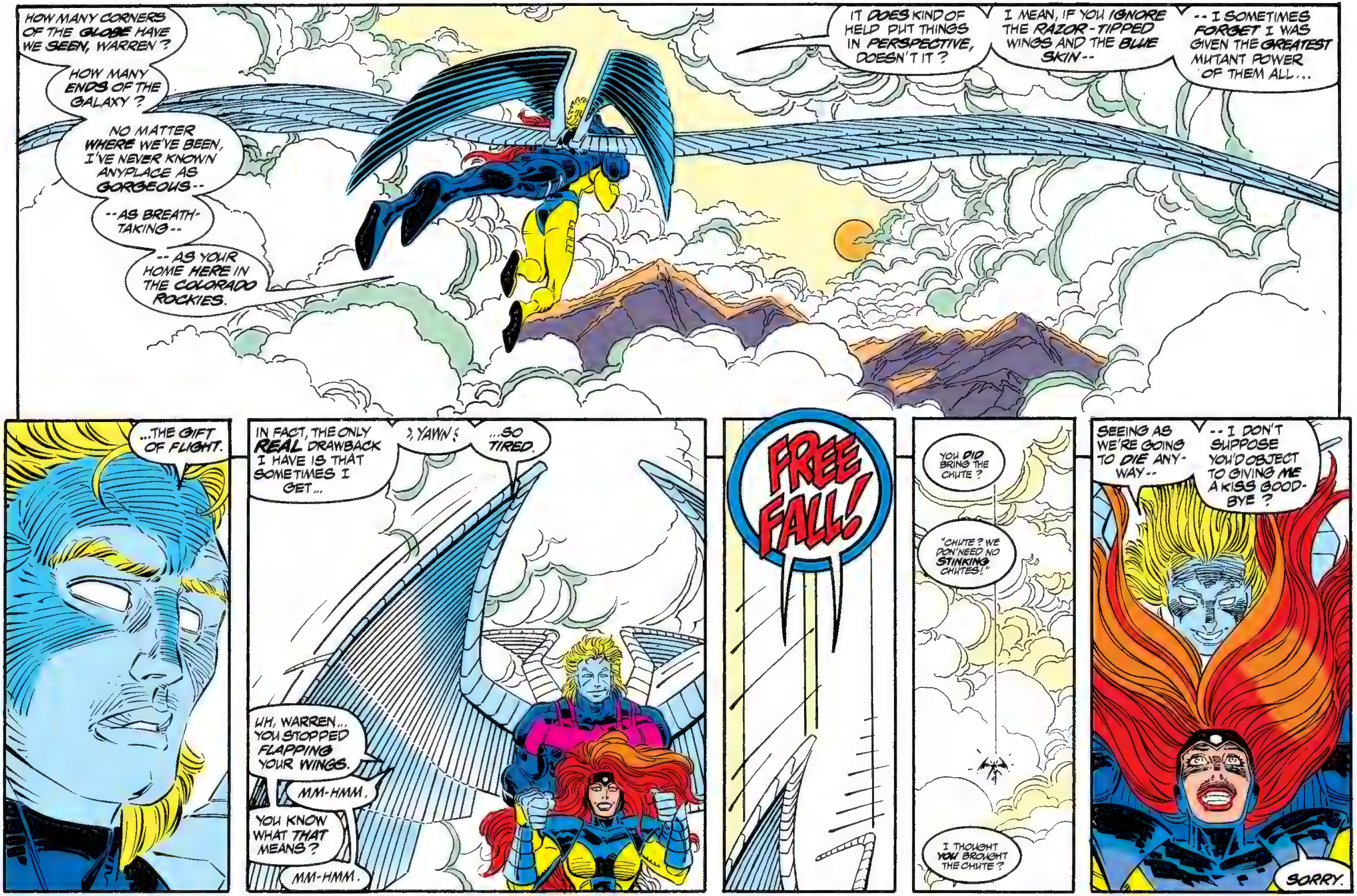
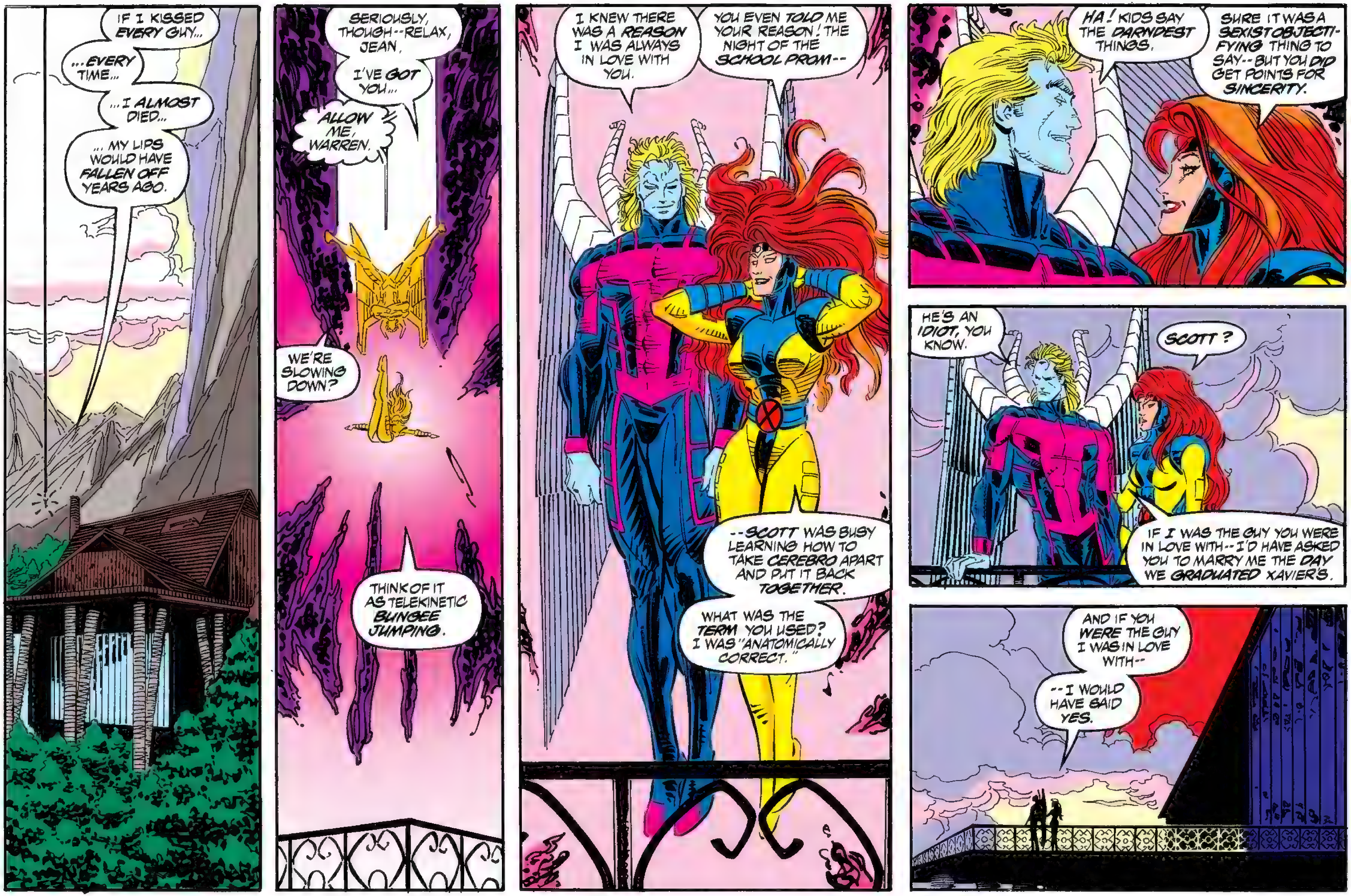
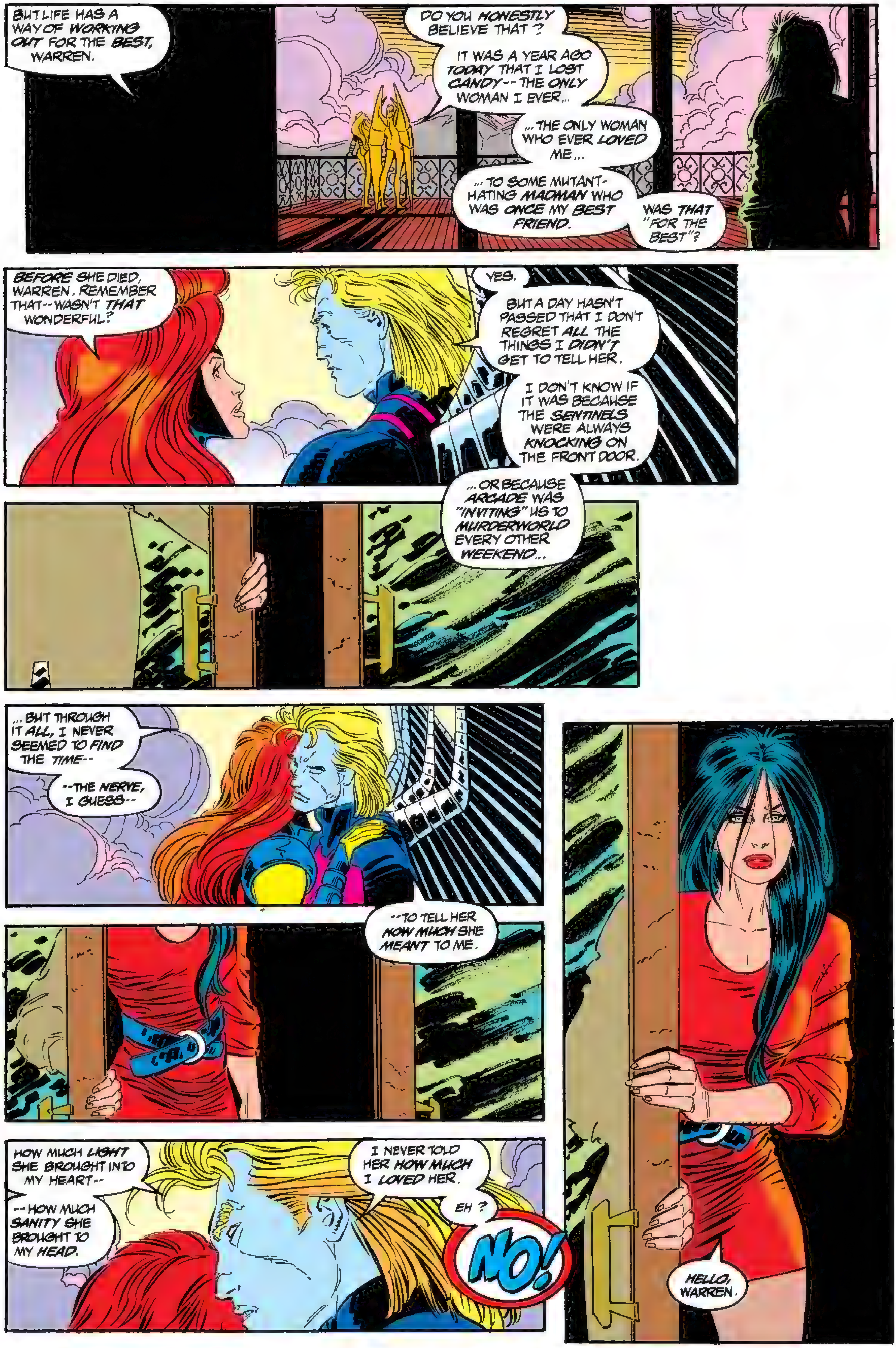
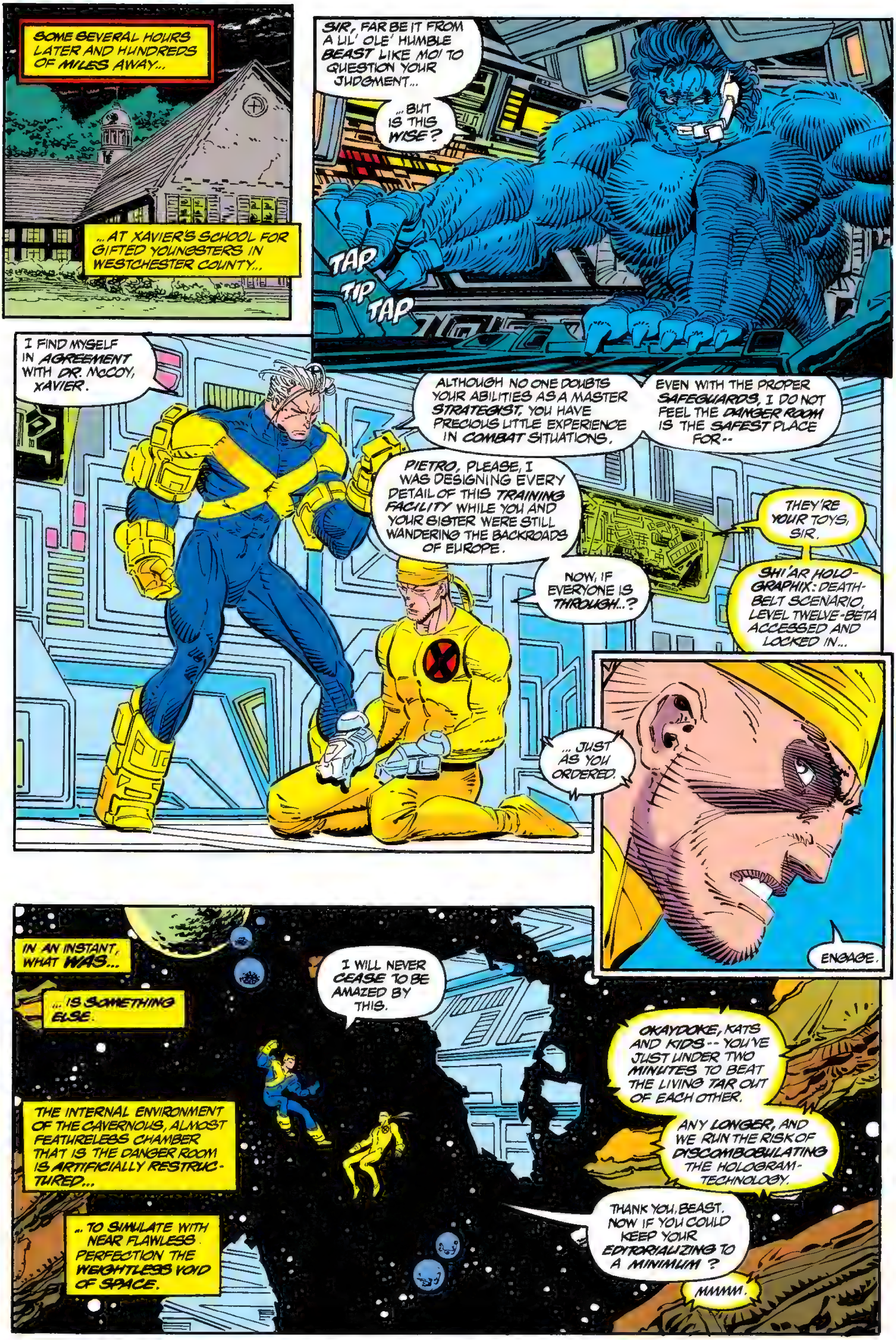
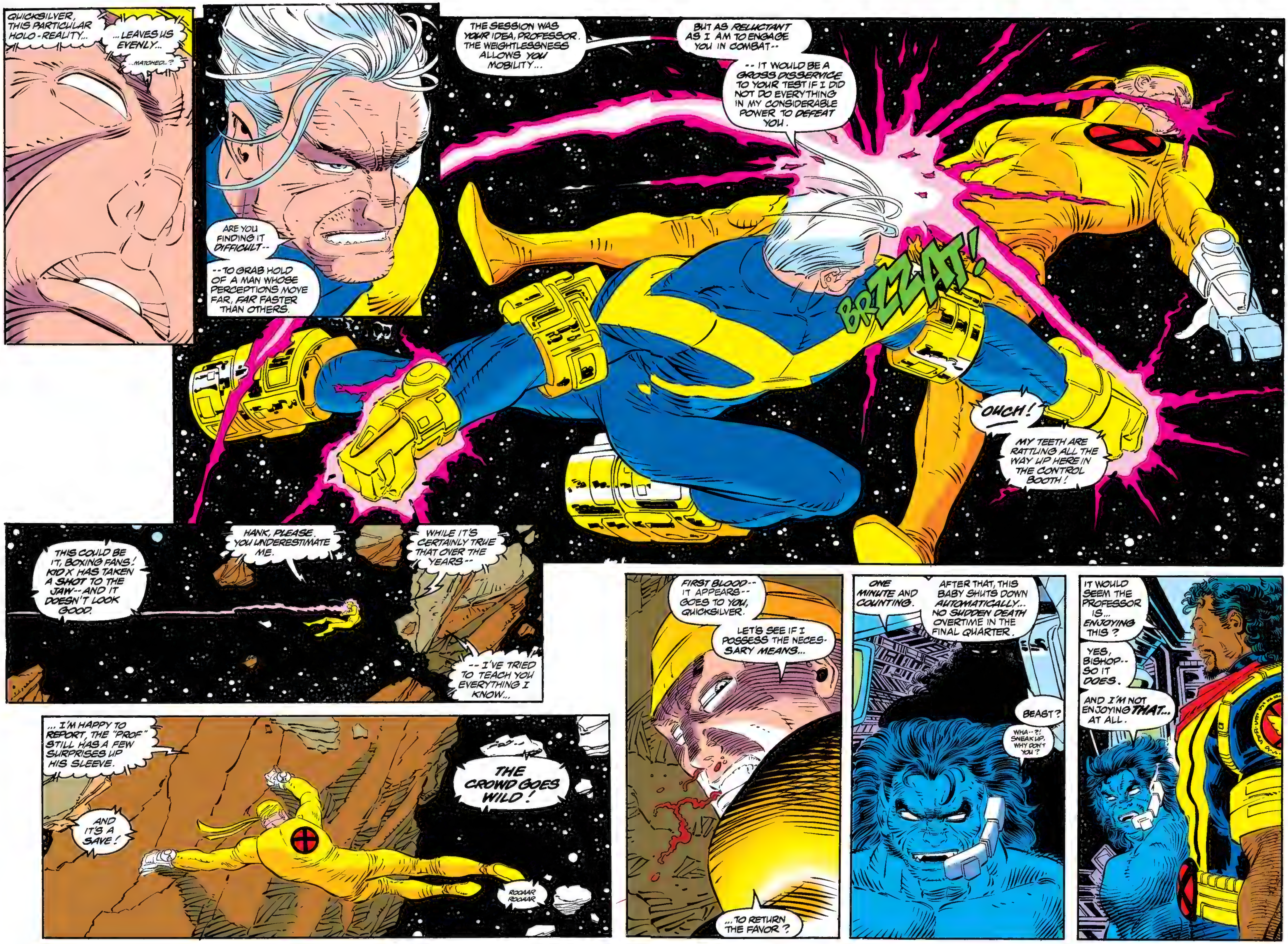

IT IS A RARE MOMENT IN THE LIVES OF WARREN WORTHINGTON III AND JEAN GREY.
A MOMENT OF UNBRIDLED JOY--
--OF AN INNOCENCE RECAPTURED...
I SHOULD WARN YOU, JEAN--IF YOU DON'T AGREE TO MARRY ME...
...I'M REALLY AFRAID I'M GOING TO HAVE TO DROP YOU.
AS X-MEN, THESE TWO HAVE SPENT MUCH OF THEIR YOUNG LIVES TRAINING IN THE USE OF THEIR UNIQUE POWERS, THOSE GENETIC TWISTS AND QUIRKS THAT HAVE MADE THEM MORE THAN HUMAN...
...AND, THUS, SUCH MOMENTS OF UTTER FREEDOM ARE TO BE TREASURED.
HMMMM.
MARRIAGE TO MY BEST FRIEND--
--OR DEATH?
STAN LEE PRESENTS THE UNCANNY X-MEN IN
MORTAL COILS
GIVE ME A MINUTE HERE.
SCOTT LOBDELL WRITER
JOHN ROMITA, JR. PENCILER
DAN GREEN INKER
CHRIS ELIOPOULOS LETTERER
S. BUCCE COLORIST
BOB HARRAS EDITOR
TOM DeFALCO - EDITOR IN CHIEF
THIS STORY TAKES PLACE BETWEEN UNCANNY 304 & X-MEN 25.
IT IS A MOMENT... THAT UNFORTUNATELY, CANNOT LAST.

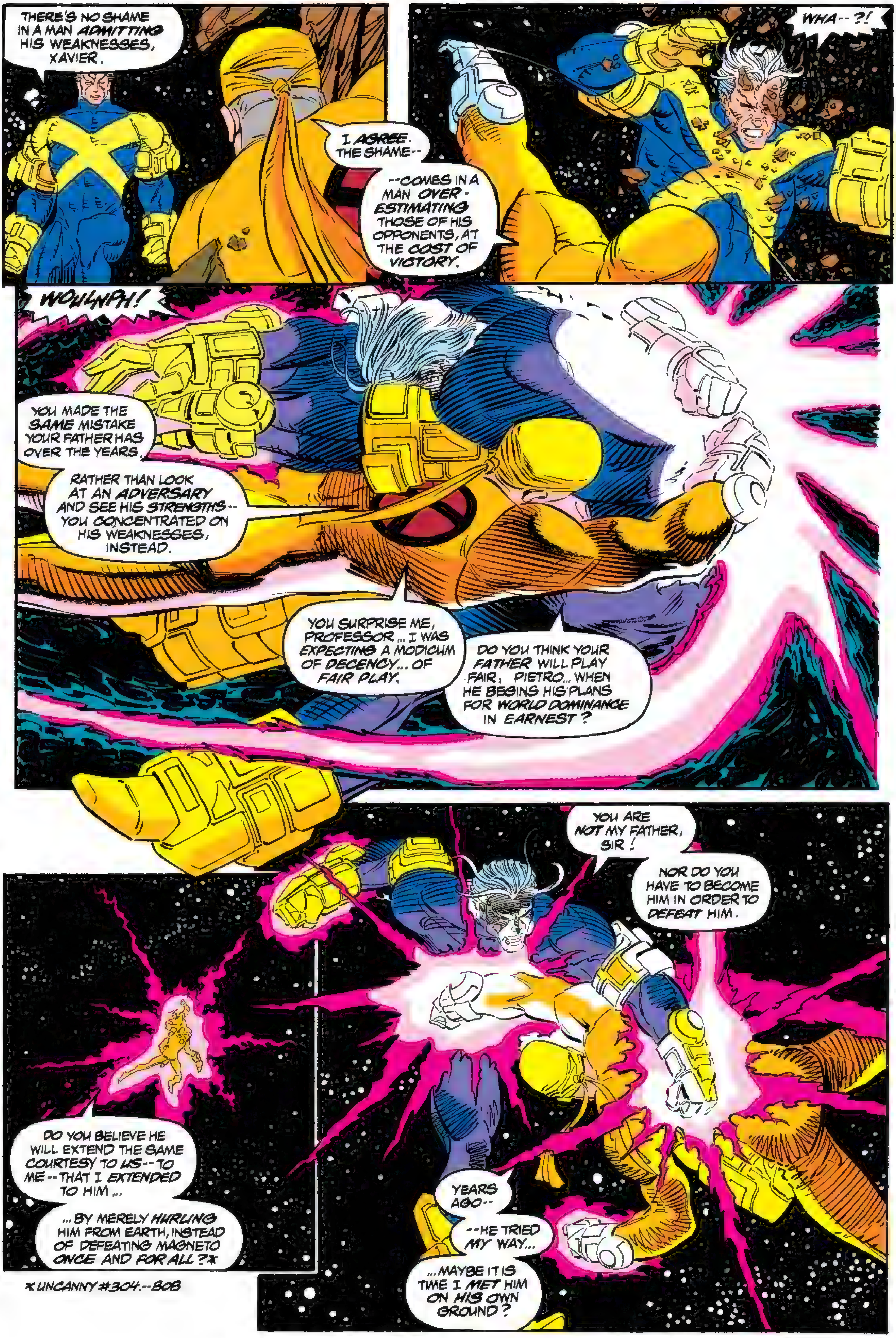

HOW MANY CORNERS OF THE GLOBE HAVE WE SEEN, WARREN?
HOW MANY ENDS OF THE GALAXY?
NO MATTER WHERE WE'VE BEEN, I'VE NEVER KNOWN ANYPLACE AS GORGEOUS--
--AS BREATH-TAKING--
--AS YOUR HOME HERE IN THE COLORADO ROCKIES.
IT DOES KIND OF HELP PUT THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE, DOESN'T IT?
I MEAN, IF YOU IGNORE THE RAZOR-TIPPED WINGS AND THE BLUE SKIN--
--I SOMETIMES FORGET I WAS GIVEN THE GREATEST MUTANT POWER OF THEM ALL...
...THE GIFT OF FLIGHT.
IN FACT, THE ONLY REAL DRAWBACK I HAVE IS THAT SOMETIMES I GET...
YAWN
...SO TIRED.
UH, WARREN... YOU STOPPED FLAPPING YOUR WINGS.
MM-HMM.
YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS?
MM-HMM.
FREE FALL!
YOU DID BRING THE CHUTE?
"CHUTE? WE DON'T NEED NO STINKING CHUTES!"
I THOUGHT YOU BROUGHT THE CHUTE?
SEEING AS WE'RE GOING TO DIE ANY-WAY--
--I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU'D OBJECT TO GIVING ME A KISS GOOD-BYE?
SORRY.


IF I KISSED EVERY GUY...
...EVERY TIME...
...I ALMOST DIED...
... MY LIPS WOULD HAVE FALLEN OFF YEARS AGO.
SERIOUSLY, THOUGH--RELAX, JEAN.
I'VE GOT YOU...
ALLOW ME, WARREN.
WE'RE SLOWING DOWN?
THINK OF IT AS TELEKINETIC BUNGEE JUMPING.
I KNEW THERE WAS A REASON I WAS ALWAYS IN LOVE WITH YOU.
YOU EVEN TOLD ME YOUR REASON! THE NIGHT OF THE SCHOOL PROM--
--SCOTT WAS BUSY LEARNING HOW TO TAKE CEREBRO APART AND PUT IT BACK TOGETHER.
WHAT WAS THE TERM YOU USED? I WAS "ANATOMICALLY CORRECT."
HA! KIDS SAY THE DARNDEST THINGS.
SURE IT WAS A SEXIST OBJECTIFYING THING TO SAY--BUT YOU DID GET POINTS FOR SINCERITY.
HE'S AN IDIOT, YOU KNOW.
SCOTT?
IF I WAS THE GUY YOU WERE IN LOVE WITH--I'D HAVE ASKED YOU TO MARRY ME THE DAY WE GRADUATED XAVIER'S.
AND IF YOU WERE THE GUY I WAS IN LOVE WITH--
--I WOULD HAVE SAID YES.

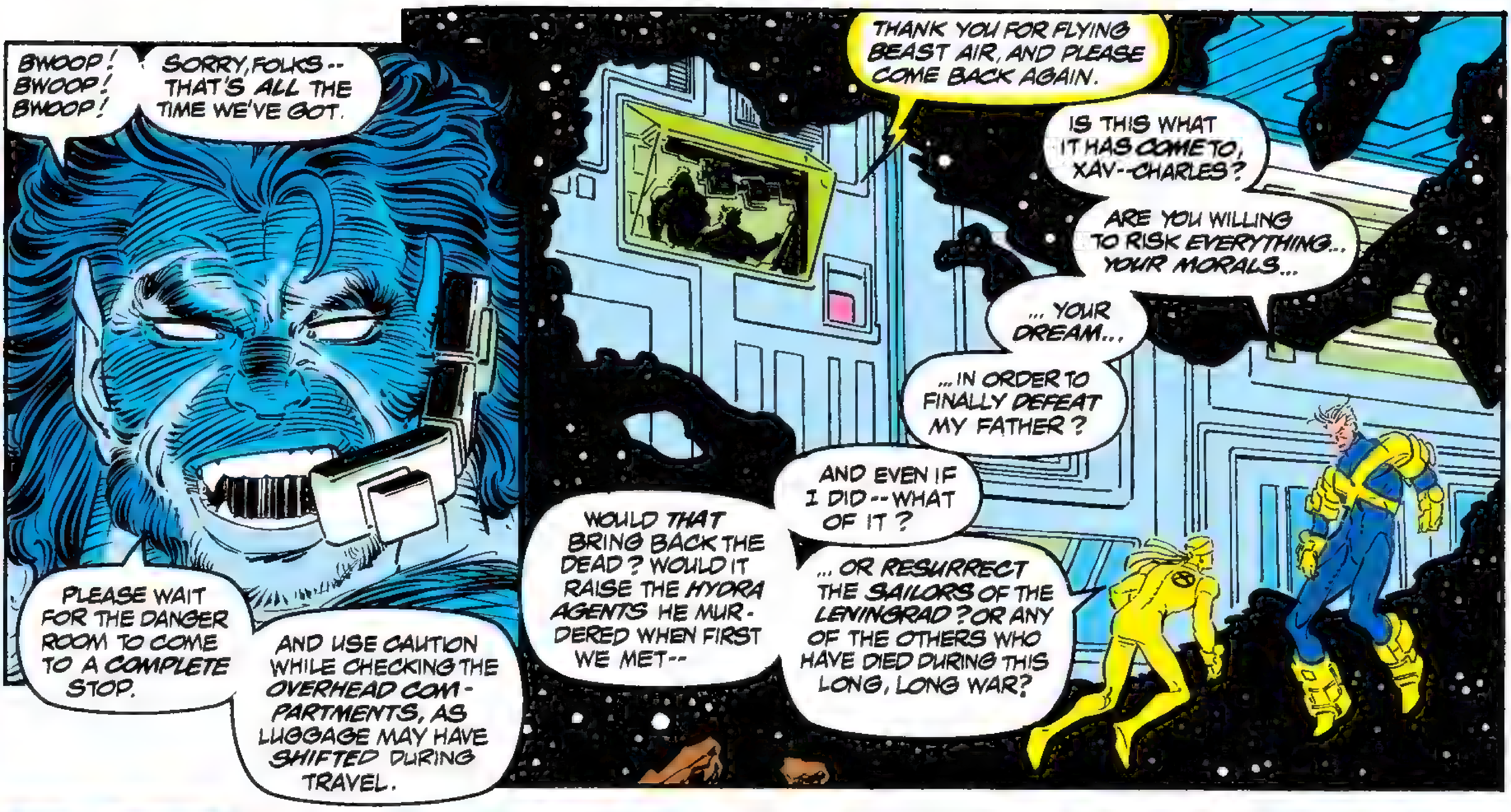

BUT LIFE HAS A WAY OF WORKING OUT FOR THE BEST, WARREN.
DO YOU HONESTLY BELIEVE THAT?
IT WAS A YEAR AGO TODAY THAT I LOST CANDY-- THE ONLY WOMAN I EVER...
... THE ONLY WOMAN WHO EVER LOVED ME...
... TO SOME MUTANT-HATING MADMAN WHO WAS ONCE MY BEST FRIEND.
WAS THAT "FOR THE BEST"?
BEFORE SHE DIED, WARREN. REMEMBER THAT-- WASN'T THAT WONDERFUL?
YES.
BUT A DAY HASN'T PASSED THAT I DON'T REGRET ALL THE THINGS I DIDN'T GET TO TELL HER.
I DON'T KNOW IF IT WAS BECAUSE THE SENTINELS WERE ALWAYS KNOCKING ON THE FRONT DOOR.
... OR BECAUSE ARCADE WAS "INVITING" US TO MURDERWORLD EVERY OTHER WEEKEND...
... BUT THROUGH IT ALL, I NEVER SEEMED TO FIND THE TIME--
--THE NERVE, I GUESS--
--TO TELL HER HOW MUCH SHE MEANT TO ME.
HOW MUCH LIGHT SHE BROUGHT INTO MY HEART--
--HOW MUCH SANITY SHE BROUGHT TO MY HEAD.
I NEVER TOLD HER HOW MUCH I LOVED HER.
EH ?
NO!
HELLO, WARREN.

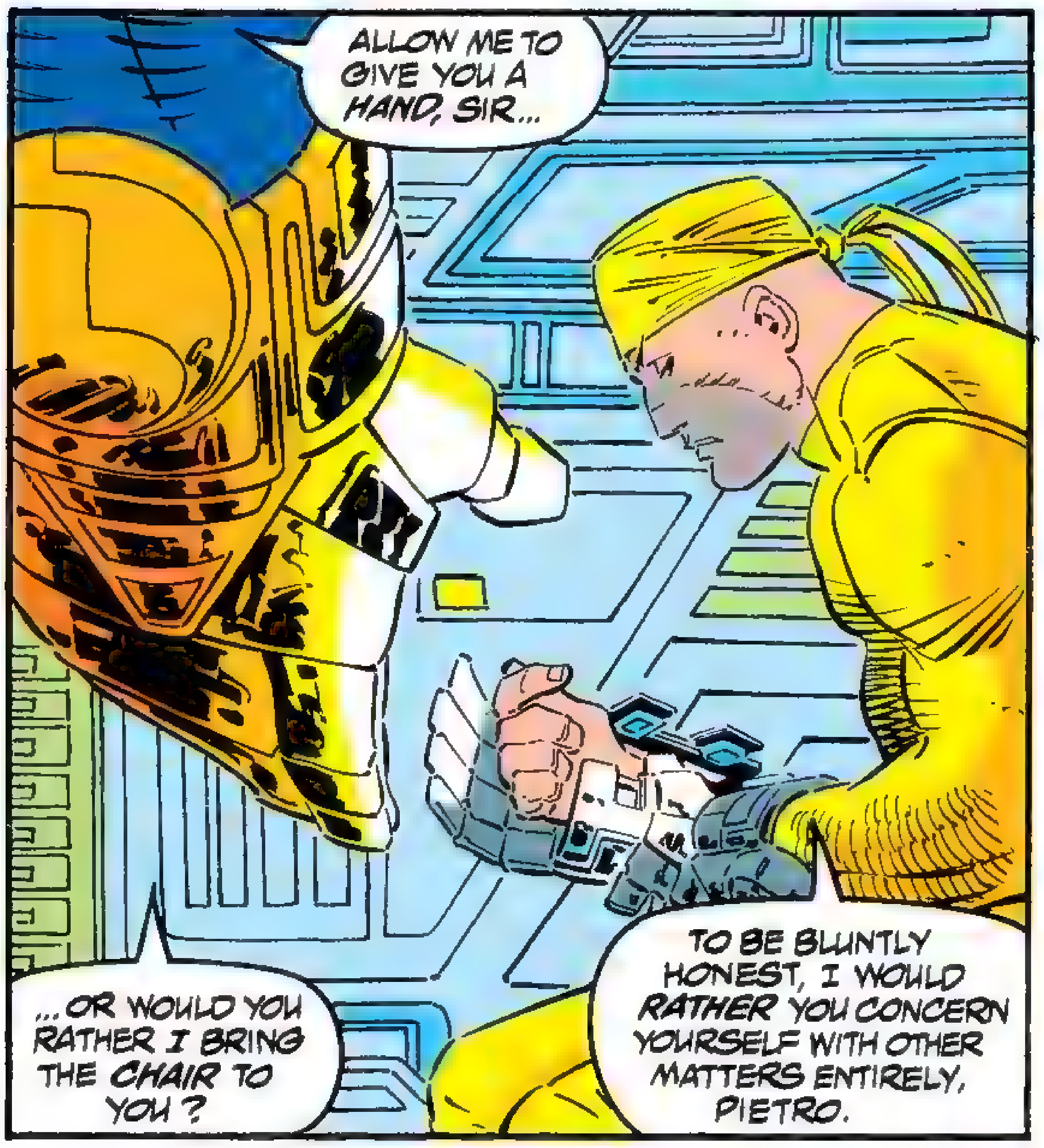

SOME SEVERAL HOURS LATER AND HUNDREDS OF MILES AWAY...
...AT XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS IN WESTCHESTER COUNTY...
SIR, FAR BE IT FROM A LIL' OLE' HUMBLE BEAST LIKE MOI TO QUESTION YOUR JUDGMENT...
...BUT IS THIS WISE?
TAP TIP TAP
I FIND MYSELF IN AGREEMENT WITH DR. McCOY, XAVIER.
ALTHOUGH NO ONE DOUBTS YOUR ABILITIES AS A MASTER STRATEGIST, YOU HAVE PRECIOUS LITTLE EXPERIENCE IN COMBAT SITUATIONS.
EVEN WITH THE PROPER SAFEGUARDS, I DO NOT FEEL THE DANGER ROOM IS THE SAFEST PLACE FOR--
PIETRO, PLEASE, I WAS DESIGNING EVERY DETAIL OF THIS TRAINING FACILITY WHILE YOU AND YOUR SISTER WERE STILL WANDERING THE BACKROADS OF EUROPE.
THEY'RE YOUR TOYS, SIR.
NOW, IF EVERYONE IS THROUGH...?
SHI'AR HOLOGRAPHIX: DEATH-BELT SCENARIO, LEVEL TWELVE-BETA ACCESSED AND LOCKED IN...
...JUST AS YOU ORDERED.
ENGAGE.
IN AN INSTANT, WHAT WAS...
...IS SOMETHING ELSE.
I WILL NEVER CEASE TO BE AMAZED BY THIS.
THE INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE CAVERNOUS, ALMOST FEATURELESS CHAMBER THAT IS THE DANGER ROOM IS ARTIFICIALLY RESTRUCTURED...
...TO SIMULATE WITH NEAR FLAWLESS PERFECTION THE WEIGHTLESS VOID OF SPACE.
OKAYDOKE, KATS AND KIDS -- YOU'VE JUST UNDER TWO MINUTES TO BEAT THE LIVING TAR OUT OF EACH OTHER.
ANY LONGER, AND WE RUN THE RISK OF DISCOMBOBULATING THE HOLOGRAM-TECHNOLOGY.
THANK YOU, BEAST. NOW IF YOU COULD KEEP YOUR EDITORIALIZING TO A MINIMUM?
MMMM.

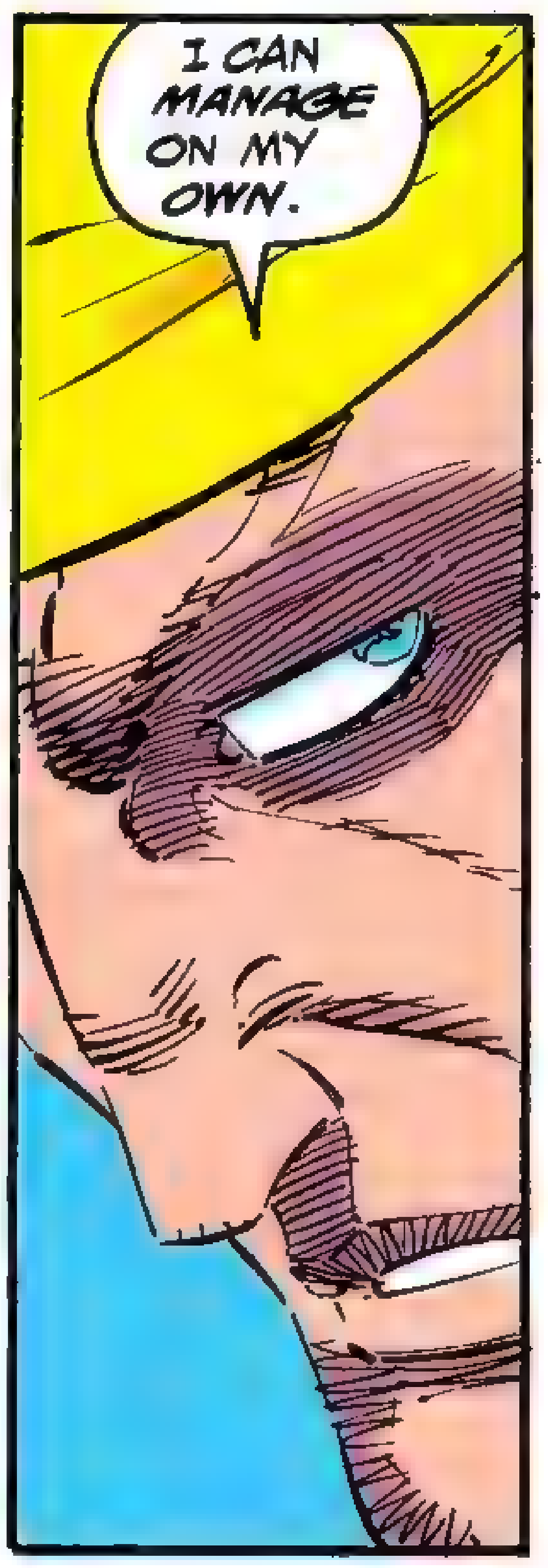

QUICKSILVER, THIS PARTICULAR HOLO-REALITY...
...LEAVES US EVENLY...
...MATCHED...?
ARE YOU FINDING IT DIFFICULT--
--TO GRAB HOLD OF A MAN WHOSE PERCEPTIONS MOVE FAR, FAR FASTER THAN OTHERS.
THE SESSION WAS YOUR IDEA, PROFESSOR. THE WEIGHTLESSNESS ALLOWS YOU MOBILITY...
BUT AS RELUCTANT AS I AM TO ENGAGE YOU IN COMBAT--
--IT WOULD BE A GROSS DISSERVICE TO YOUR TEST IF I DID NOT DO EVERYTHING IN MY CONSIDERABLE POWER TO DEFEAT YOU.
BRZZAT!
OUCH!
MY TEETH ARE RATTLING ALL THE WAY UP HERE IN THE CONTROL BOOTH!
THIS COULD BE IT, BOXING FANS! KID X HAS TAKEN A SHOT TO THE JAW--AND IT DOESN'T LOOK GOOD.
HANK, PLEASE. YOU UNDERESTIMATE ME.
WHILE IT'S CERTAINLY TRUE THAT OVER THE YEARS--
--I'VE TRIED TO TEACH YOU EVERYTHING I KNOW...
...I'M HAPPY TO REPORT, THE "PROF" STILL HAS A FEW SURPRISES UP HIS SLEEVE.
THE CROWD GOES WILD!
AND IT'S A SAVE!
ROOAAR ROOAAR
FIRST BLOOD--IT APPEARS--GOES TO YOU, QUICKSILVER.
LET'S SEE IF I POSSESS THE NECESSARY MEANS...
...TO RETURN THE FAVOR?
ONE MINUTE AND COUNTING.
AFTER THAT, THIS BABY SHUTS DOWN AUTOMATICALLY... NO SUDDEN DEATH OVERTIME IN THE FINAL QUARTER.
BEAST?
WHA--?! SNEAK UP, WHY DON'T YOU?
IT WOULD SEEM THE PROFESSOR IS... ENJOYING THIS?
YES, BISHOP.. SO IT DOES.
AND I'M NOT ENJOYING THAT... AT ALL.

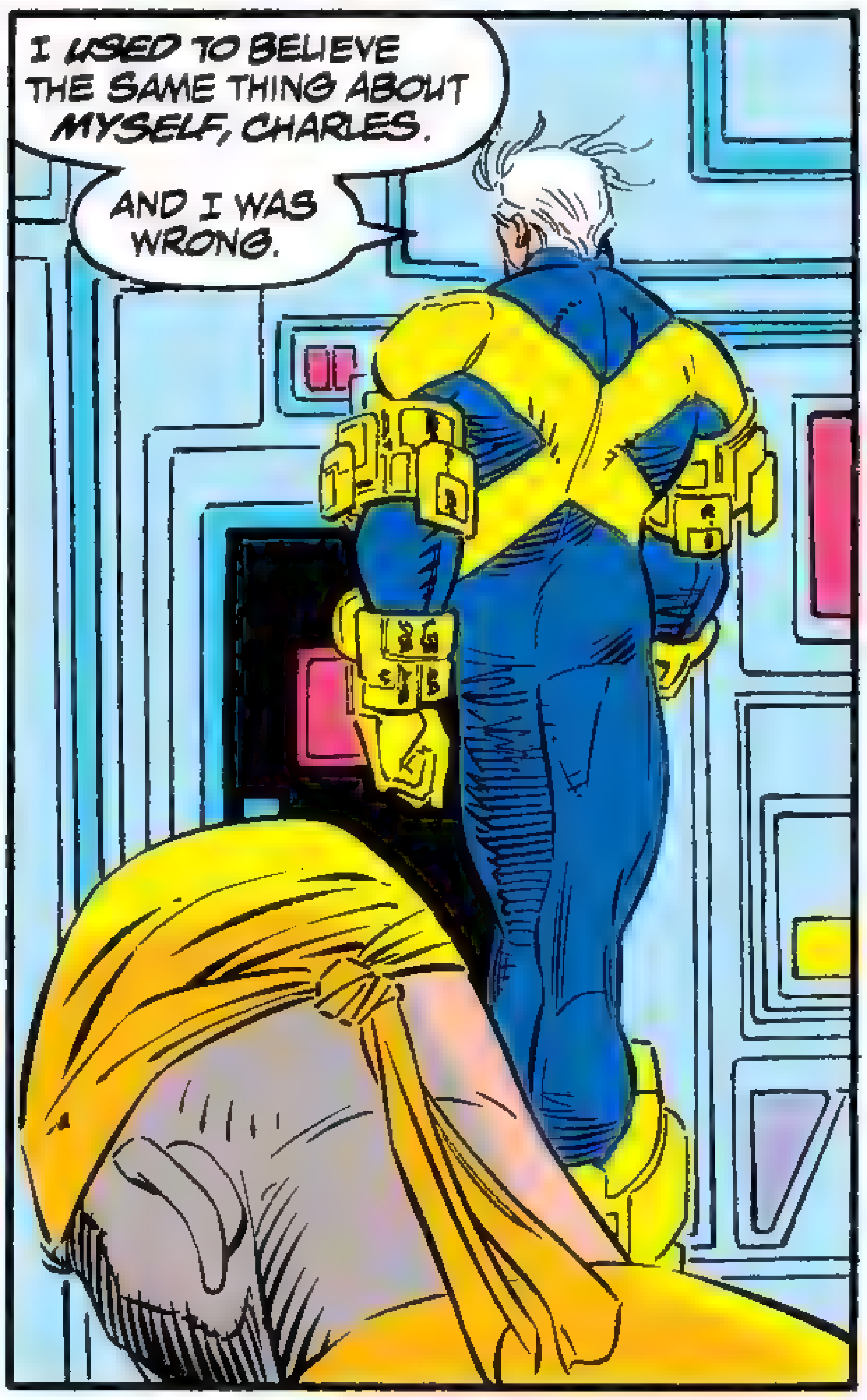

THERE'S NO SHAME IN A MAN *ADMITTING* HIS WEAKNESSES, XAVIER.
I *AGREE*. THE SHAME--
--COMES IN A MAN *OVER-ESTIMATING* THOSE OF HIS OPPONENTS, AT THE *COST* OF *VICTORY*.
WHA--?!
WOULNPH!
YOU MADE THE *SAME* MISTAKE YOUR FATHER HAS OVER THE YEARS.
RATHER THAN LOOK AT AN *ADVERSARY* AND SEE HIS *STRENGTHS*--YOU CONCENTRATED ON HIS WEAKNESSES, INSTEAD.
YOU SURPRISE ME, PROFESSOR... I WAS *EXPECTING* A MODICUM OF *DECENCY*... OF *FAIR PLAY*.
DO YOU THINK YOUR *FATHER* WILL PLAY FAIR, PIETRO... WHEN HE BEGINS HIS PLANS FOR *WORLD DOMINANCE* IN *EARNEST*?
YOU ARE *NOT* MY FATHER, SIR!
NOR DO YOU HAVE TO BECOME HIM IN ORDER TO *DEFEAT* HIM.
DO YOU BELIEVE HE WILL EXTEND THE SAME COURTESY TO *US*--TO ME--THAT I *EXTENDED* TO HIM...
...BY MERELY *HURLING* HIM FROM EARTH, INSTEAD OF DEFEATING MAGNETO *ONCE AND FOR ALL*?*
YEARS AGO--
--HE TRIED *MY* WAY...
...MAYBE IT IS TIME I *MET* HIM ON *HIS OWN* GROUND?

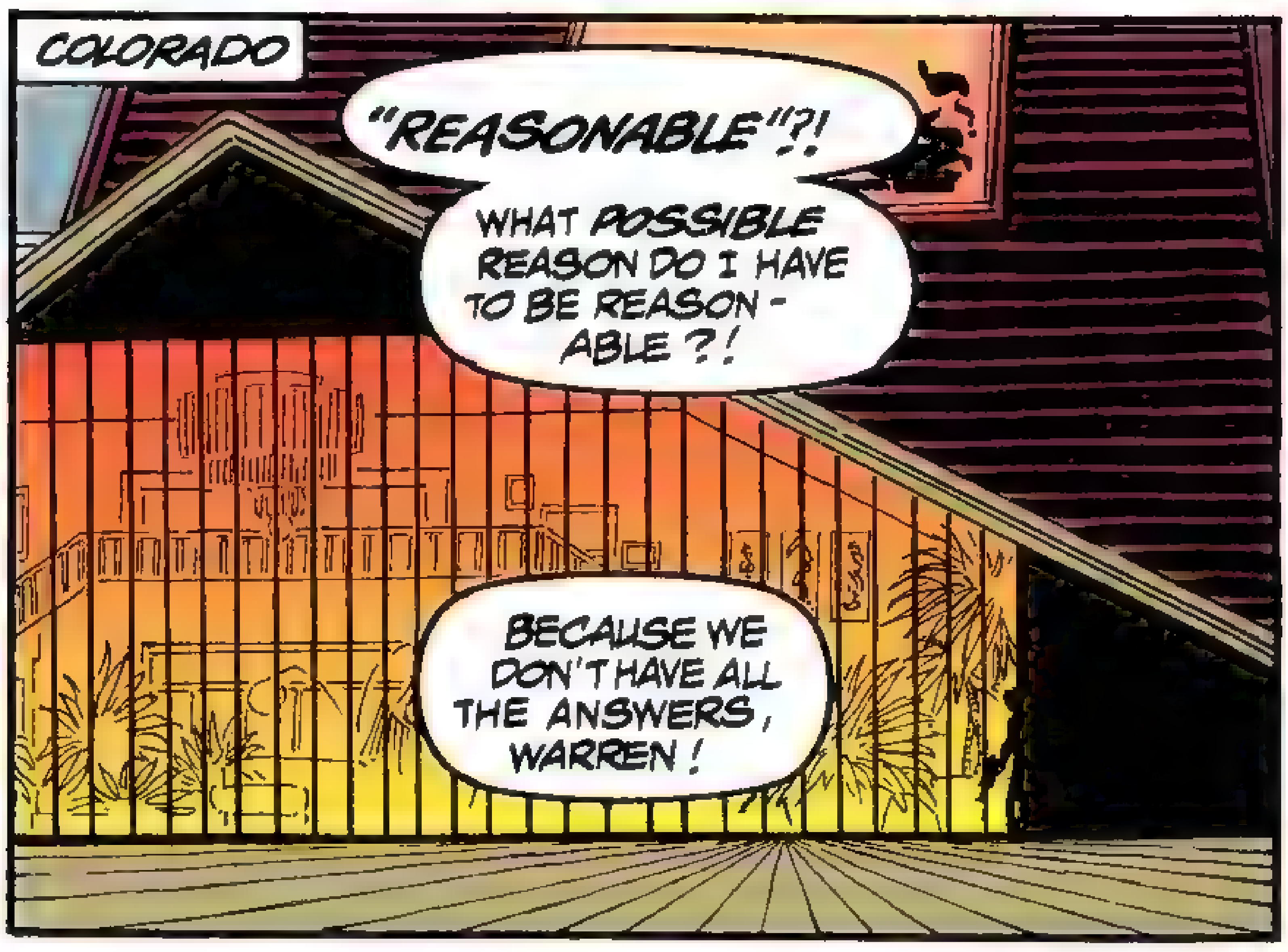
*UNCANNY #304.--BOB

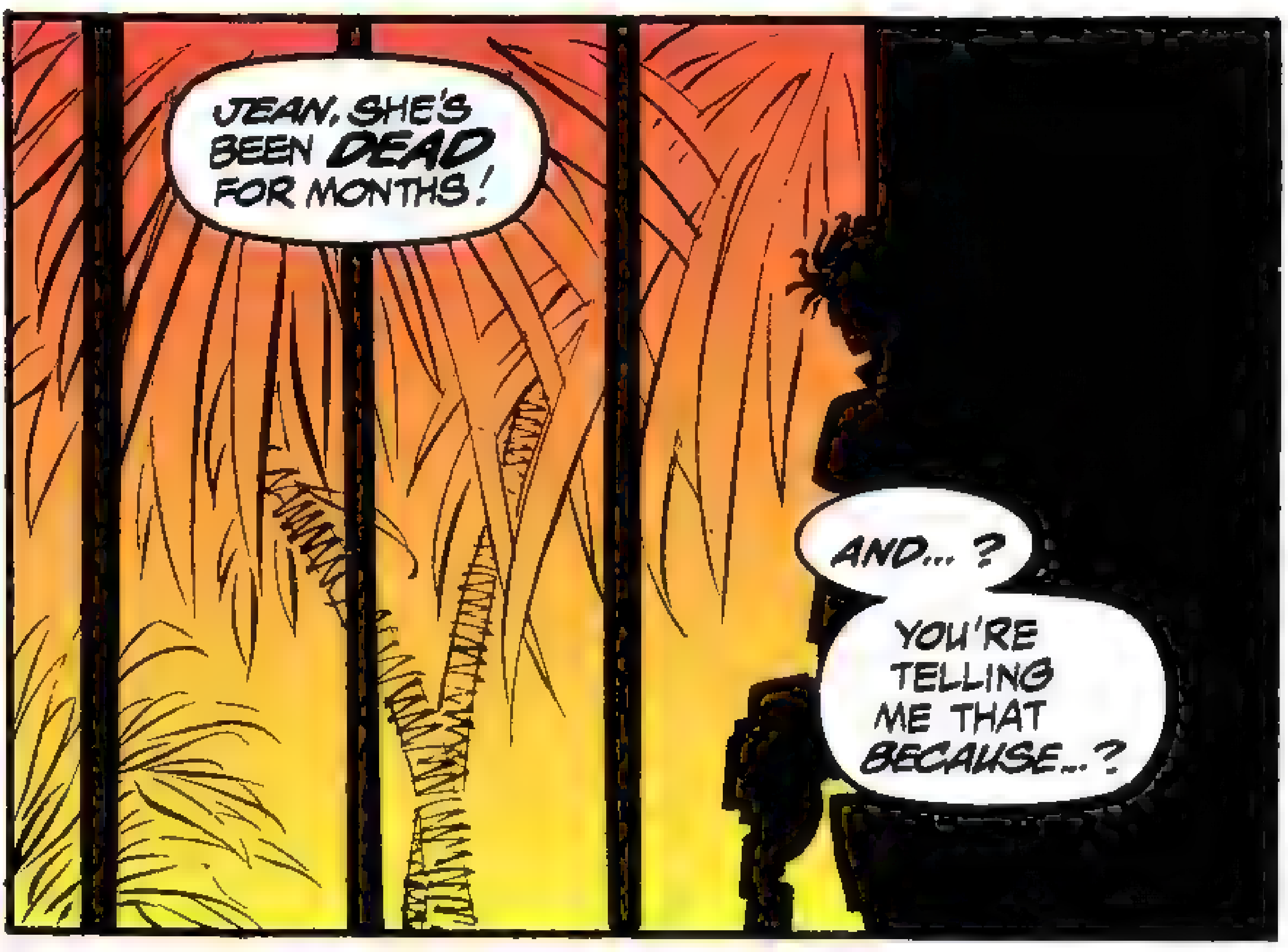

BWOOP! BWOOP! BWOOP!
SORRY, FOLKS -- THAT'S ALL THE TIME WE'VE GOT.
PLEASE WAIT FOR THE DANGER ROOM TO COME TO A COMPLETE STOP.
AND USE CAUTION WHILE CHECKING THE OVERHEAD COMPARTMENTS, AS LUGGAGE MAY HAVE SHIFTED DURING TRAVEL.
THANK YOU FOR FLYING BEAST AIR, AND PLEASE COME BACK AGAIN.
IS THIS WHAT IT HAS COME TO, XAV--CHARLES?
ARE YOU WILLING TO RISK EVERYTHING.. YOUR MORALS...
... YOUR DREAM...
... IN ORDER TO FINALLY DEFEAT MY FATHER?
AND EVEN IF I DID -- WHAT OF IT?
WOULD THAT BRING BACK THE DEAD? WOULD IT RAISE THE HYDRA AGENTS HE MURDERED WHEN FIRST WE MET--
... OR RESURRECT THE SAILORS OF THE LENINGRAD? OR ANY OF THE OTHERS WHO HAVE DIED DURING THIS LONG, LONG WAR?

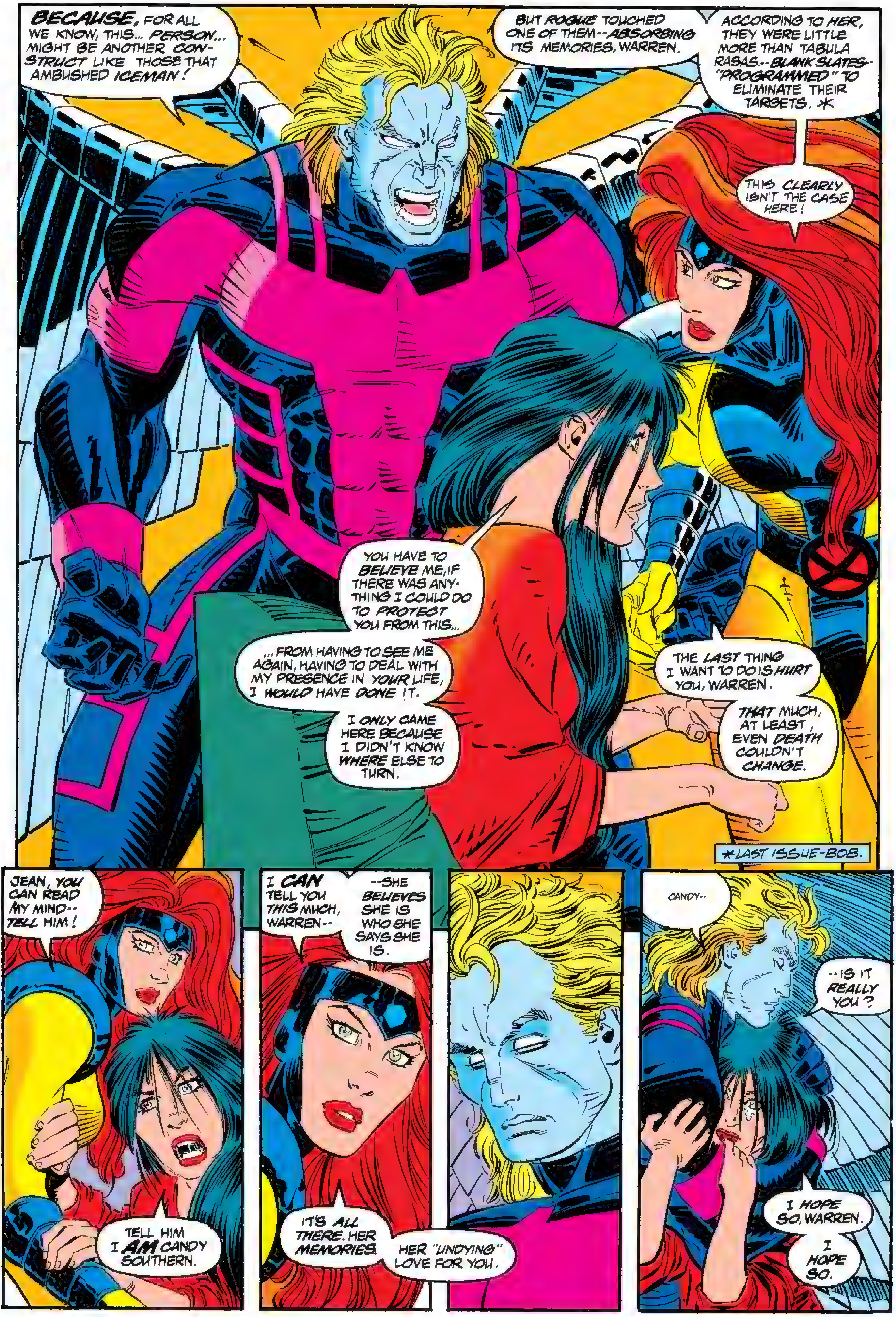

ALLOW ME TO GIVE YOU A HAND, SIR...
...OR WOULD YOU RATHER I BRING THE CHAIR TO YOU?
TO BE BLUNTLY HONEST, I WOULD RATHER YOU CONCERN YOURSELF WITH OTHER MATTERS ENTIRELY, PIETRO.

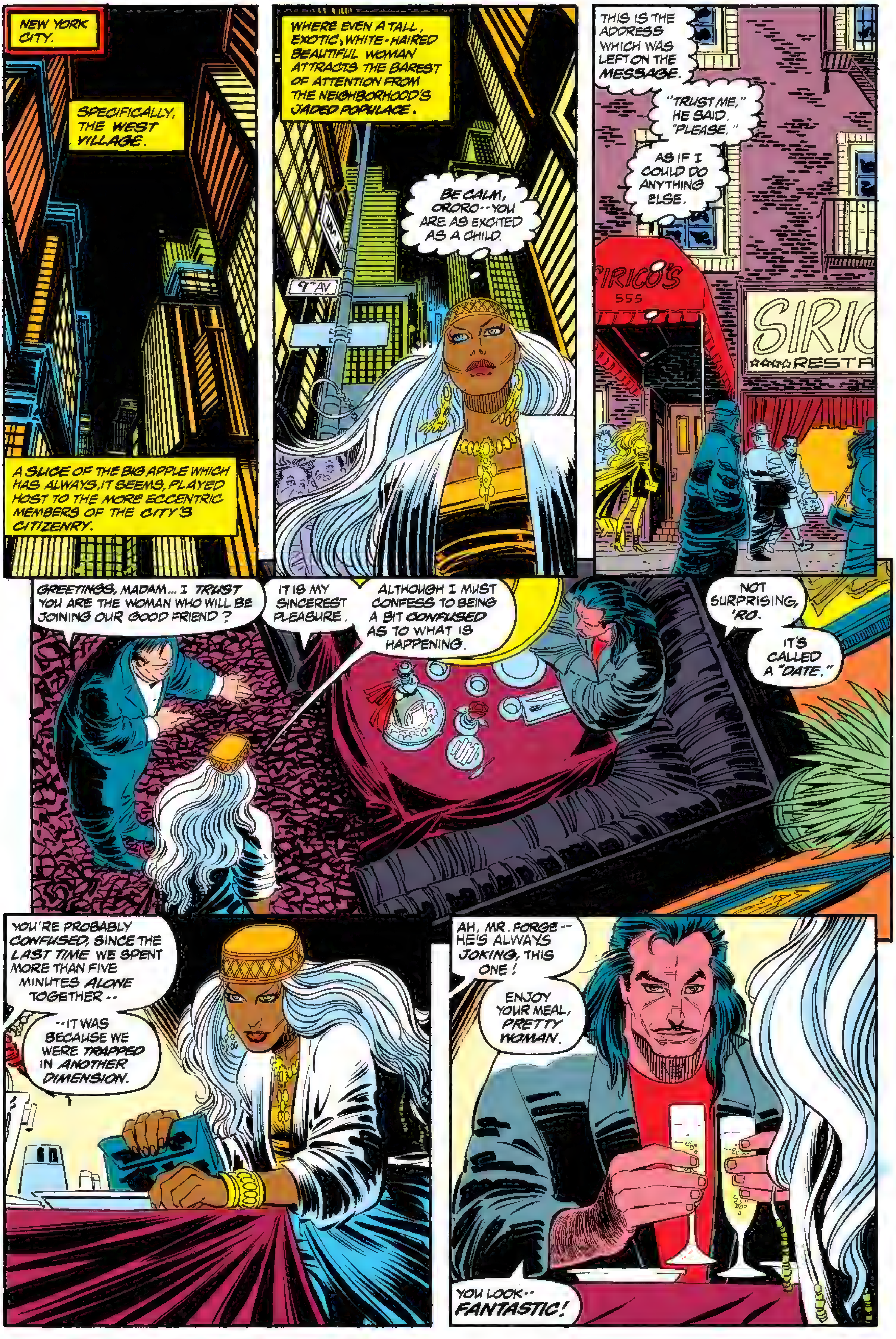

I CAN MANAGE ON MY OWN.

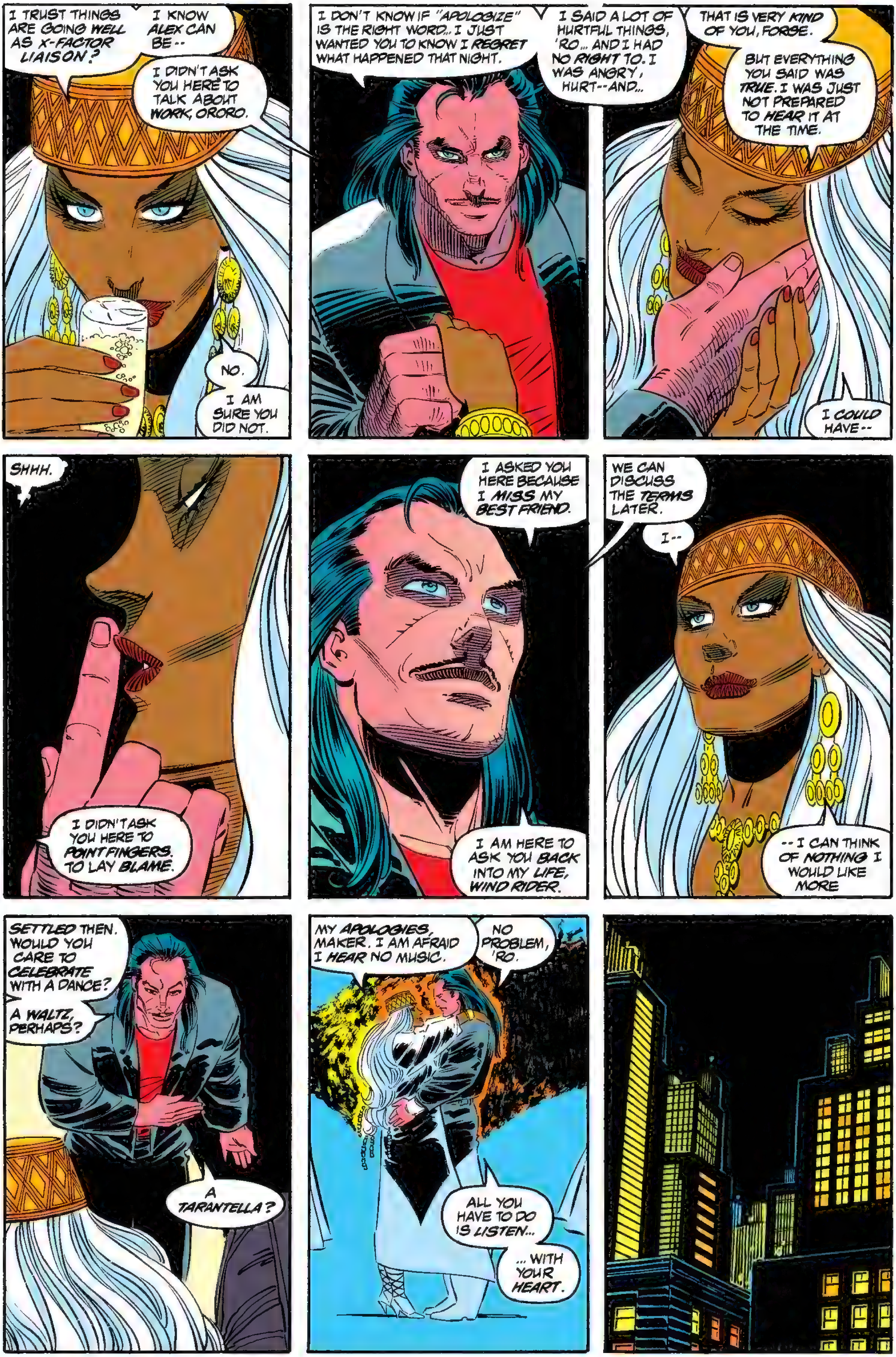

I USED TO BELIEVE THE SAME THING ABOUT MYSELF, CHARLES.
AND I WAS WRONG.

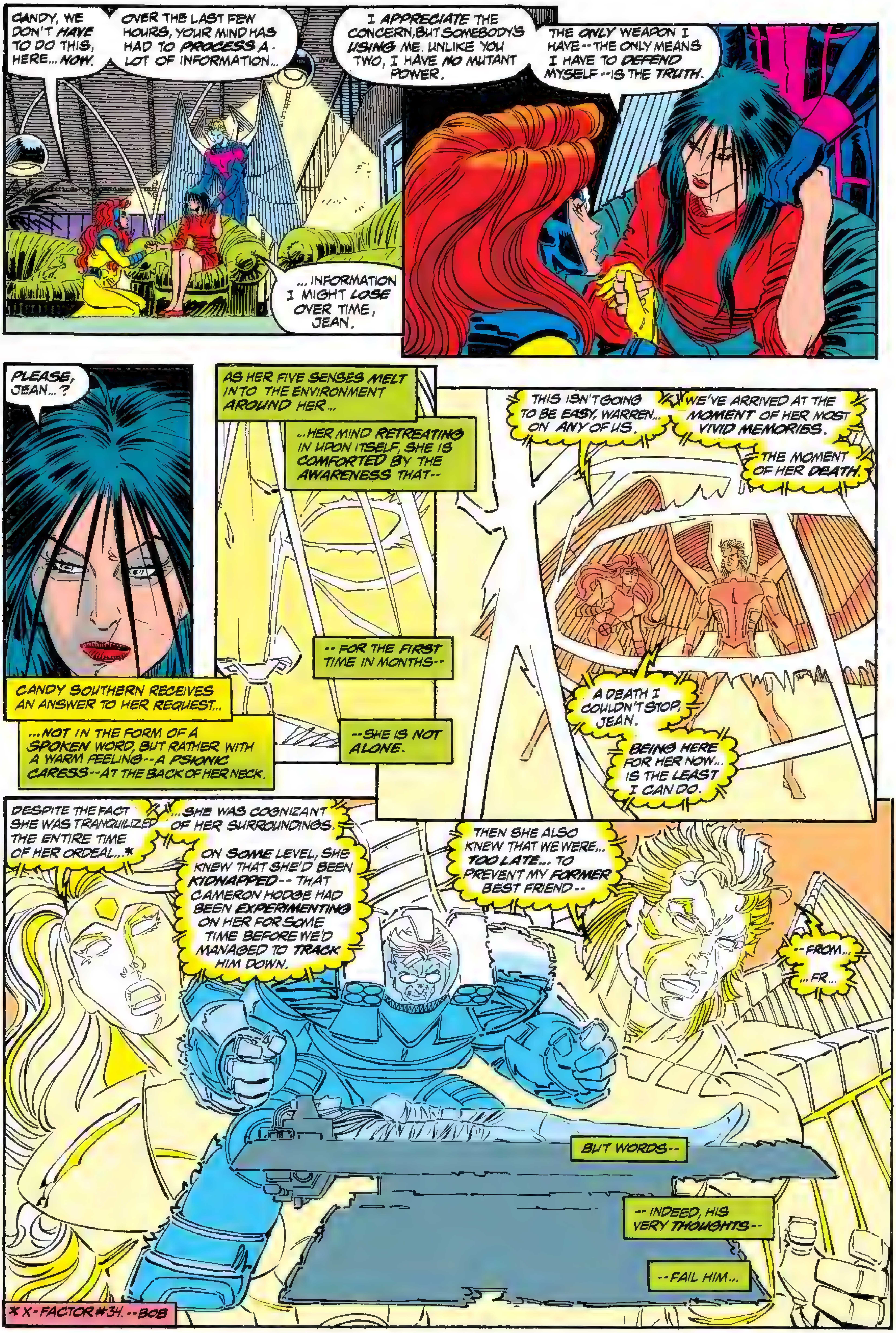

COLORADO
"REASONABLE"?!
WHAT POSSIBLE REASON DO I HAVE TO BE REASONABLE?!
BECAUSE WE DON'T HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS, WARREN!

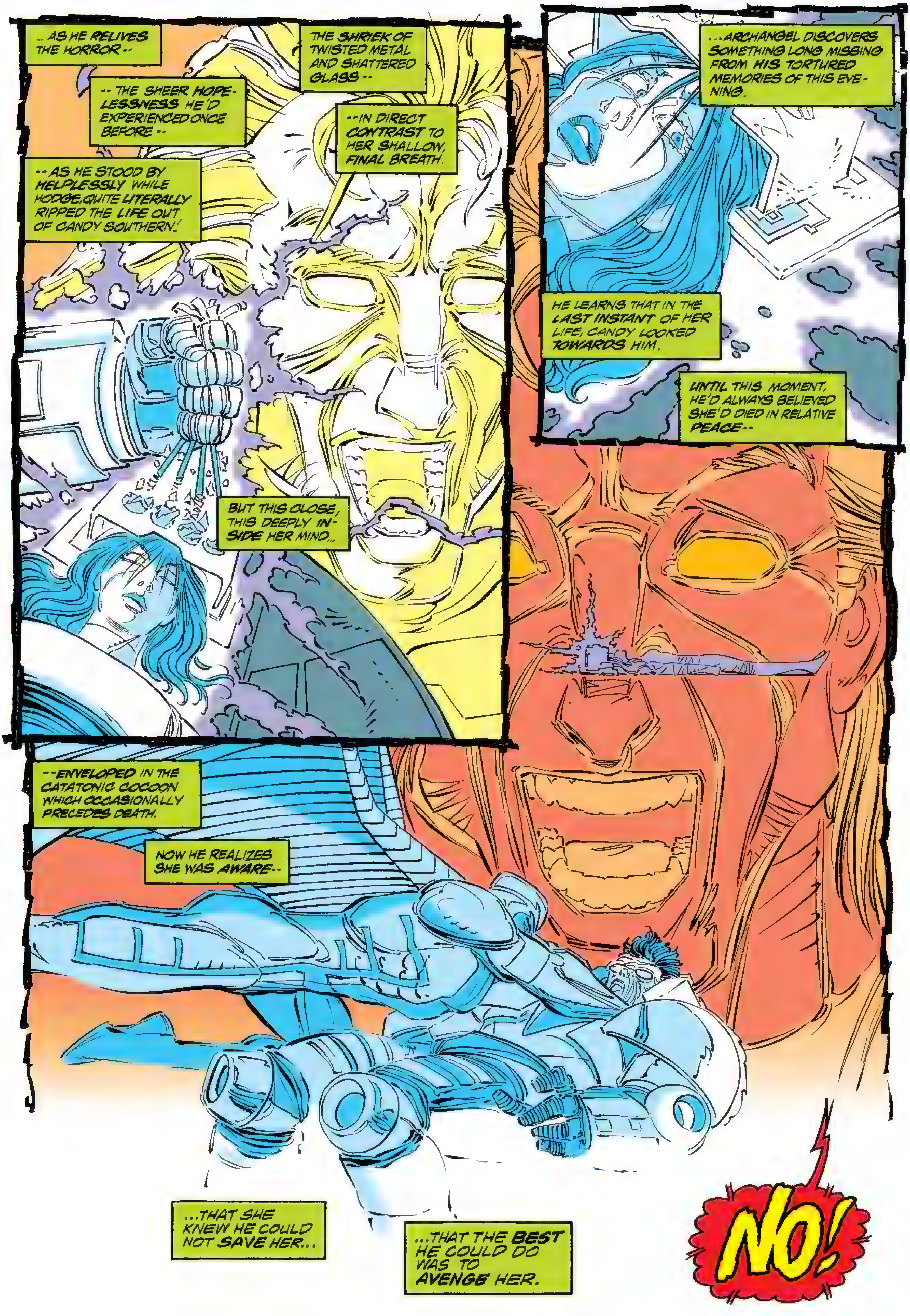

JEAN, SHE'S BEEN DEAD FOR MONTHS!
AND...?
YOU'RE TELLING ME THAT BECAUSE...?

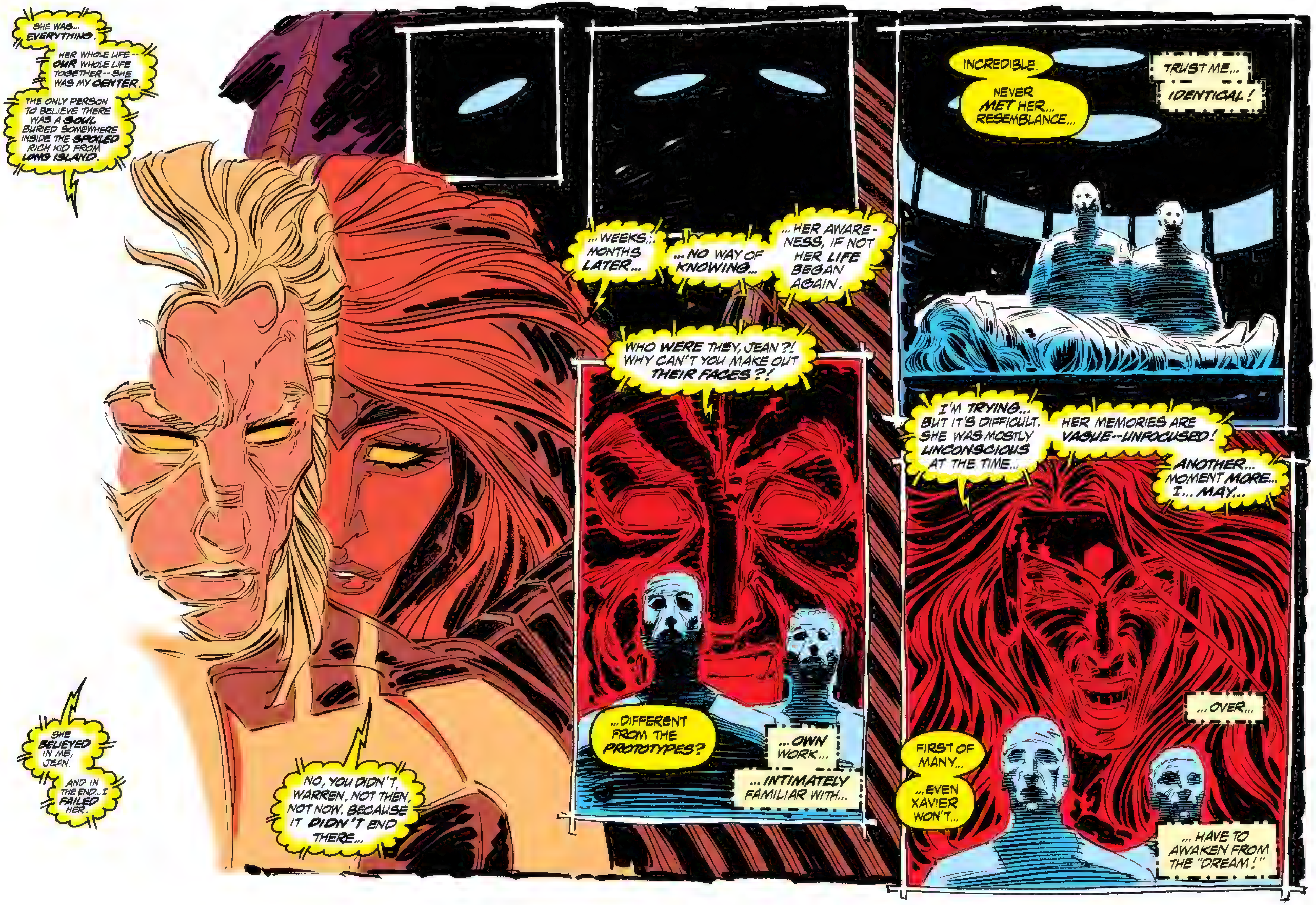

BECAUSE, FOR ALL WE KNOW, THIS... PERSON... MIGHT BE ANOTHER CONSTRUCT LIKE THOSE THAT AMBUSHED ICEMAN!
BUT ROGUE TOUCHED ONE OF THEM--ABSORBING ITS MEMORIES, WARREN.
ACCORDING TO HER, THEY WERE LITTLE MORE THAN TABULA RASAS.--BLANK SLATES--"PROGRAMMED" TO ELIMINATE THEIR TARGETS. *
THIS CLEARLY ISN'T THE CASE HERE!
YOU HAVE TO BELIEVE ME, IF THERE WAS ANYTHING I COULD DO TO PROTECT YOU FROM THIS...
...FROM HAVING TO SEE ME AGAIN, HAVING TO DEAL WITH MY PRESENCE IN YOUR LIFE, I WOULD HAVE DONE IT.
I ONLY CAME HERE BECAUSE I DIDN'T KNOW WHERE ELSE TO TURN.
THE LAST THING I WANT TO DO IS HURT YOU, WARREN.
THAT MUCH, AT LEAST, EVEN DEATH COULDN'T CHANGE.
*LAST ISSUE-BOB.
JEAN, YOU CAN READ MY MIND--TELL HIM!
TELL HIM I AM CANDY SOUTHERN.
I CAN TELL YOU THIS MUCH, WARREN--
--SHE BELIEVES SHE IS WHO SHE SAYS SHE IS.
IT'S ALL THERE. HER MEMORIES.
HER "UNDYING" LOVE FOR YOU.
CANDY--
--IS IT REALLY YOU?
I HOPE SO, WARREN.
I HOPE SO.


NEW YORK CITY.
SPECIFICALLY, THE WEST VILLAGE.
A SLICE OF THE BIG APPLE WHICH HAS ALWAYS, IT SEEMS, PLAYED HOST TO THE MORE ECCENTRIC MEMBERS OF THE CITY'S CITIZENRY.
WHERE EVEN A TALL, EXOTIC, WHITE-HAIRED BEAUTIFUL WOMAN ATTRACTS THE BAREST OF ATTENTION FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD'S JADED POPULACE.
9th AV
BE CALM, ORORO-- YOU ARE AS EXCITED AS A CHILD.
THIS IS THE ADDRESS WHICH WAS LEFT ON THE MESSAGE.
"TRUST ME," HE SAID. "PLEASE."
AS IF I COULD DO ANYTHING ELSE.
SIRICO'S
555
SIRIC
RESTA
GREETINGS, MADAM... I TRUST YOU ARE THE WOMAN WHO WILL BE JOINING OUR GOOD FRIEND?
IT IS MY SINCEREST PLEASURE.
ALTHOUGH I MUST CONFESS TO BEING A BIT CONFUSED AS TO WHAT IS HAPPENING.
NOT SURPRISING, 'RO.
IT'S CALLED A "DATE."
YOU'RE PROBABLY CONFUSED, SINCE THE LAST TIME WE SPENT MORE THAN FIVE MINUTES ALONE TOGETHER--
--IT WAS BECAUSE WE WERE TRAPPED IN ANOTHER DIMENSION.
AH, MR. FORGE-- HE'S ALWAYS JOKING, THIS ONE!
ENJOY YOUR MEAL, PRETTY WOMAN.
YOU LOOK-- FANTASTIC!


I TRUST THINGS ARE GOING WELL AS X-FACTOR LIAISON?
I KNOW ALEX CAN BE--
I DIDN'T ASK YOU HERE TO TALK ABOUT WORK, ORORO.
NO.
I AM SURE YOU DID NOT.
I DON'T KNOW IF "APOLOGIZE" IS THE RIGHT WORD.. I JUST WANTED YOU TO KNOW I REGRET WHAT HAPPENED THAT NIGHT.
I SAID A LOT OF HURTFUL THINGS, 'RO... AND I HAD NO RIGHT TO. I WAS ANGRY, HURT--AND...
THAT IS VERY KIND OF YOU, FORGE.
BUT EVERYTHING YOU SAID WAS TRUE. I WAS JUST NOT PREPARED TO HEAR IT AT THE TIME.
I COULD HAVE--
SHHH.
I DIDN'T ASK YOU HERE TO POINT FINGERS. TO LAY BLAME.
I ASKED YOU HERE BECAUSE I MISS MY BEST FRIEND.
I AM HERE TO ASK YOU BACK INTO MY LIFE, WIND RIDER.
WE CAN DISCUSS THE TERMS LATER.
I--
--I CAN THINK OF NOTHING I WOULD LIKE MORE.
SETTLED THEN. WOULD YOU CARE TO CELEBRATE WITH A DANCE?
A WALTZ, PERHAPS?
A TARANTELLA?
MY APOLOGIES, MAKER. I AM AFRAID I HEAR NO MUSIC.
NO PROBLEM, 'RO.
ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS LISTEN...
... WITH YOUR HEART.

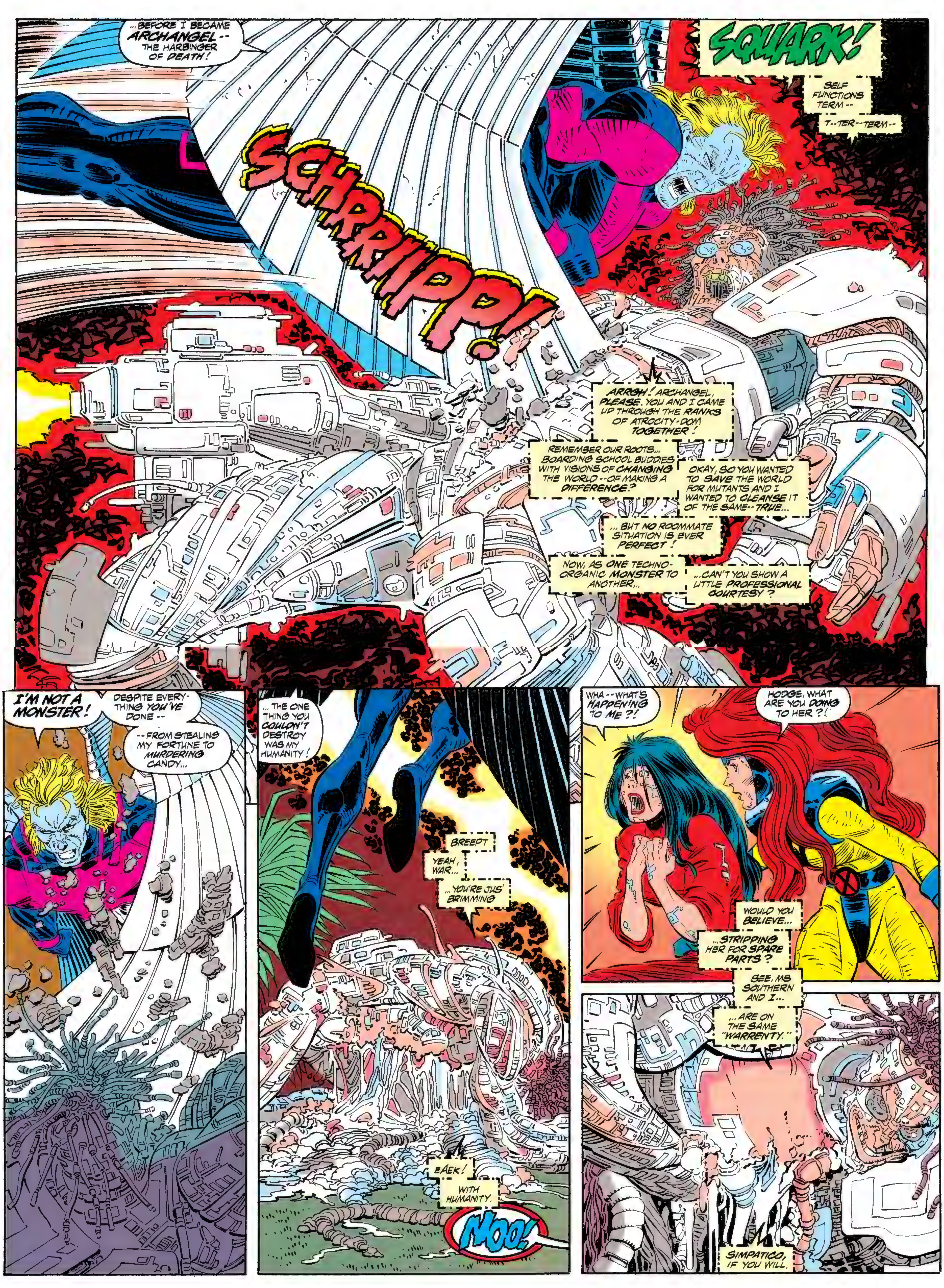

CANDY, WE DON'T *HAVE* TO DO THIS, HERE... *NOW.*
OVER THE LAST FEW HOURS, YOUR MIND HAS HAD TO *PROCESS* A LOT OF INFORMATION...
...INFORMATION I MIGHT *LOSE* OVER TIME, JEAN.
I *APPRECIATE* THE CONCERN, BUT SOMEBODY'S *USING* ME. UNLIKE YOU TWO, I HAVE *NO* MUTANT POWER.
THE *ONLY* WEAPON I HAVE -- THE ONLY MEANS I HAVE TO *DEFEND* MYSELF -- IS THE *TRUTH.*
PLEASE, JEAN...?
CANDY SOUTHERN RECEIVES AN ANSWER TO HER REQUEST...
...*NOT* IN THE FORM OF A *SPOKEN* WORD, BUT RATHER WITH A WARM FEELING -- A *PSIONIC CARESS* -- AT THE BACK OF HER NECK.
AS HER FIVE SENSES *MELT* INTO THE ENVIRONMENT *AROUND* HER...
...HER MIND *RETREATING* IN UPON ITSELF, SHE IS *COMFORTED BY* THE *AWARENESS* THAT--
-- FOR THE *FIRST* TIME IN MONTHS--
--*SHE IS NOT ALONE.*
THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE *EASY,* WARREN... ON *ANY* OF US.
WE'VE ARRIVED AT THE *MOMENT* OF HER *MOST VIVID MEMORIES.*
THE MOMENT OF HER *DEATH.*
A DEATH I COULDN'T STOP, JEAN.
BEING HERE FOR HER NOW... IS THE LEAST I CAN DO.
DESPITE THE FACT SHE WAS TRANQUILIZED THE ENTIRE TIME OF HER ORDEAL...*
...SHE WAS *COGNIZANT* OF HER SURROUNDINGS.
ON *SOME* LEVEL, SHE KNEW THAT SHE'D BEEN *KIDNAPPED* -- THAT CAMERON HODGE HAD BEEN *EXPERIMENTING* ON HER FOR SOME TIME BEFORE WE'D MANAGED TO *TRACK* HIM DOWN.
THEN SHE ALSO KNEW THAT WE WERE... *TOO LATE*... TO PREVENT MY *FORMER* BEST FRIEND --
-- FROM...
... FR...
BUT WORDS --
-- INDEED, HIS VERY *THOUGHTS* --
-- *FAIL HIM*...
* X-FACTOR #34. --BOB

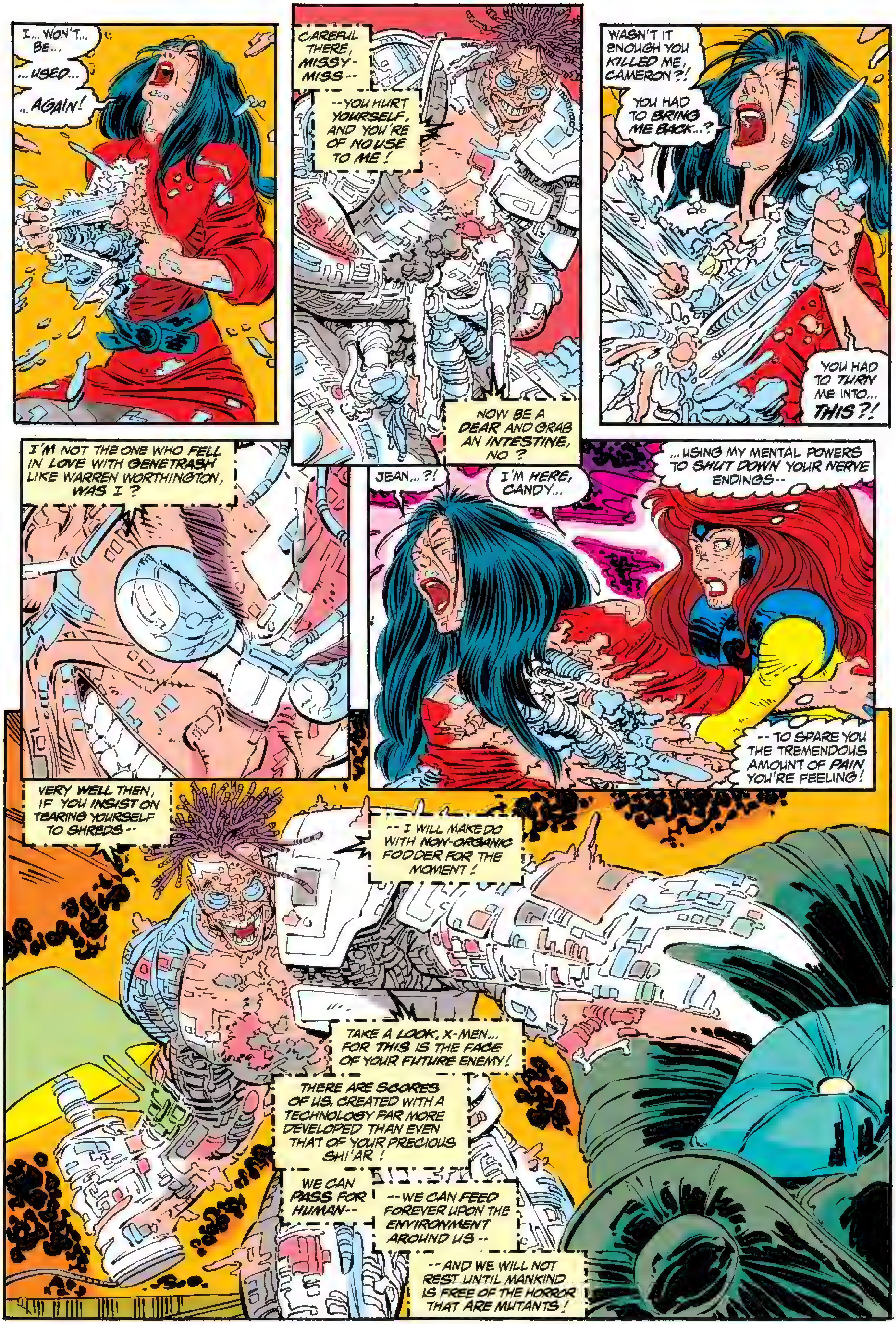

.. AS HE RELIVES THE HORROR --
-- THE SHEER HOPELESSNESS HE'D EXPERIENCED ONCE BEFORE --
-- AS HE STOOD BY HELPLESSLY WHILE HODGE, QUITE LITERALLY RIPPED THE LIFE OUT OF CANDY SOUTHERN!
THE SHRIEK OF TWISTED METAL AND SHATTERED GLASS --
-- IN DIRECT CONTRAST TO HER SHALLOW, FINAL BREATH.
BUT THIS CLOSE, THIS DEEPLY INSIDE HER MIND...
...ARCHANGEL DISCOVERS SOMETHING LONG MISSING FROM HIS TORTURED MEMORIES OF THIS EVENING.
HE LEARNS THAT IN THE LAST INSTANT OF HER LIFE, CANDY LOOKED TOWARDS HIM.
UNTIL THIS MOMENT, HE'D ALWAYS BELIEVED SHE'D DIED IN RELATIVE PEACE--
--ENVELOPED IN THE CATATONIC COCOON WHICH OCCASIONALLY PRECEDES DEATH.
NOW HE REALIZES SHE WAS AWARE--
...THAT SHE KNEW HE COULD NOT SAVE HER...
...THAT THE BEST HE COULD DO WAS TO AVENGE HER.
NO!

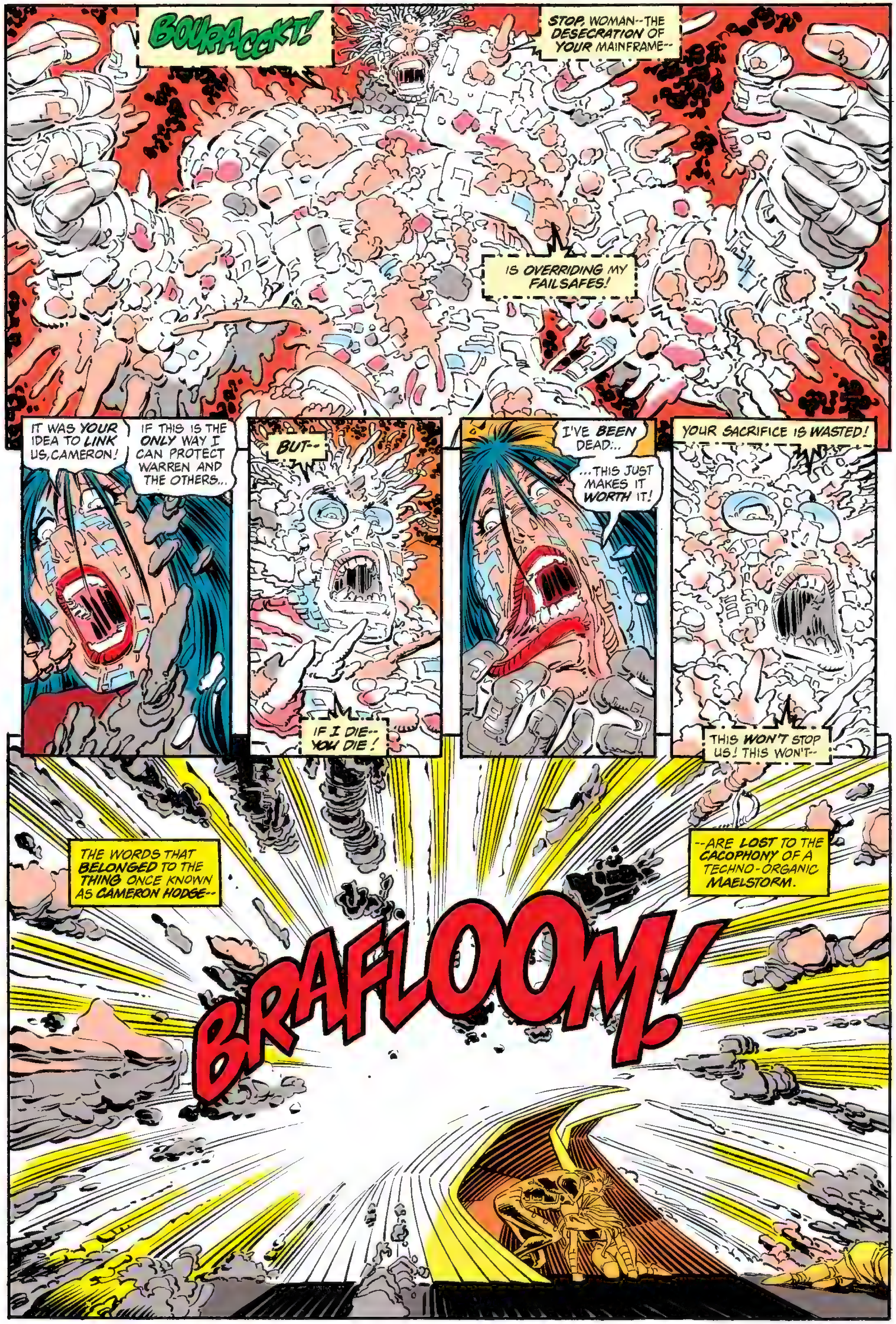

SHE WAS... EVERYTHING.
HER WHOLE LIFE-- OUR WHOLE LIFE TOGETHER--SHE WAS MY CENTER.
THE ONLY PERSON TO BELIEVE THERE WAS A SOUL BURIED SOMEWHERE INSIDE THE SPOILED RICH KID FROM LONG ISLAND.
SHE BELIEVED IN ME, JEAN.
AND IN THE END... I FAILED HER.
NO, YOU DIDN'T, WARREN. NOT THEN, NOT NOW. BECAUSE IT DIDN'T END THERE...
...WEEKS... MONTHS LATER...
...NO WAY OF KNOWING...
...HER AWARENESS, IF NOT HER LIFE BEGAN AGAIN.
WHO WERE THEY, JEAN?! WHY CAN'T YOU MAKE OUT THEIR FACES?!
...DIFFERENT FROM THE PROTOTYPES?
...OWN WORK...
...INTIMATELY FAMILIAR WITH...
INCREDIBLE.
NEVER MET HER... RESEMBLANCE...
TRUST ME... IDENTICAL!
I'M TRYING... BUT IT'S DIFFICULT. SHE WAS MOSTLY UNCONSCIOUS AT THE TIME...
HER MEMORIES ARE VAGUE--UNFOCUSED!
ANOTHER... MOMENT MORE... I... MAY...
...OVER...
FIRST OF MANY...
...EVEN XAVIER WON'T...
...HAVE TO AWAKEN FROM THE "DREAM!"

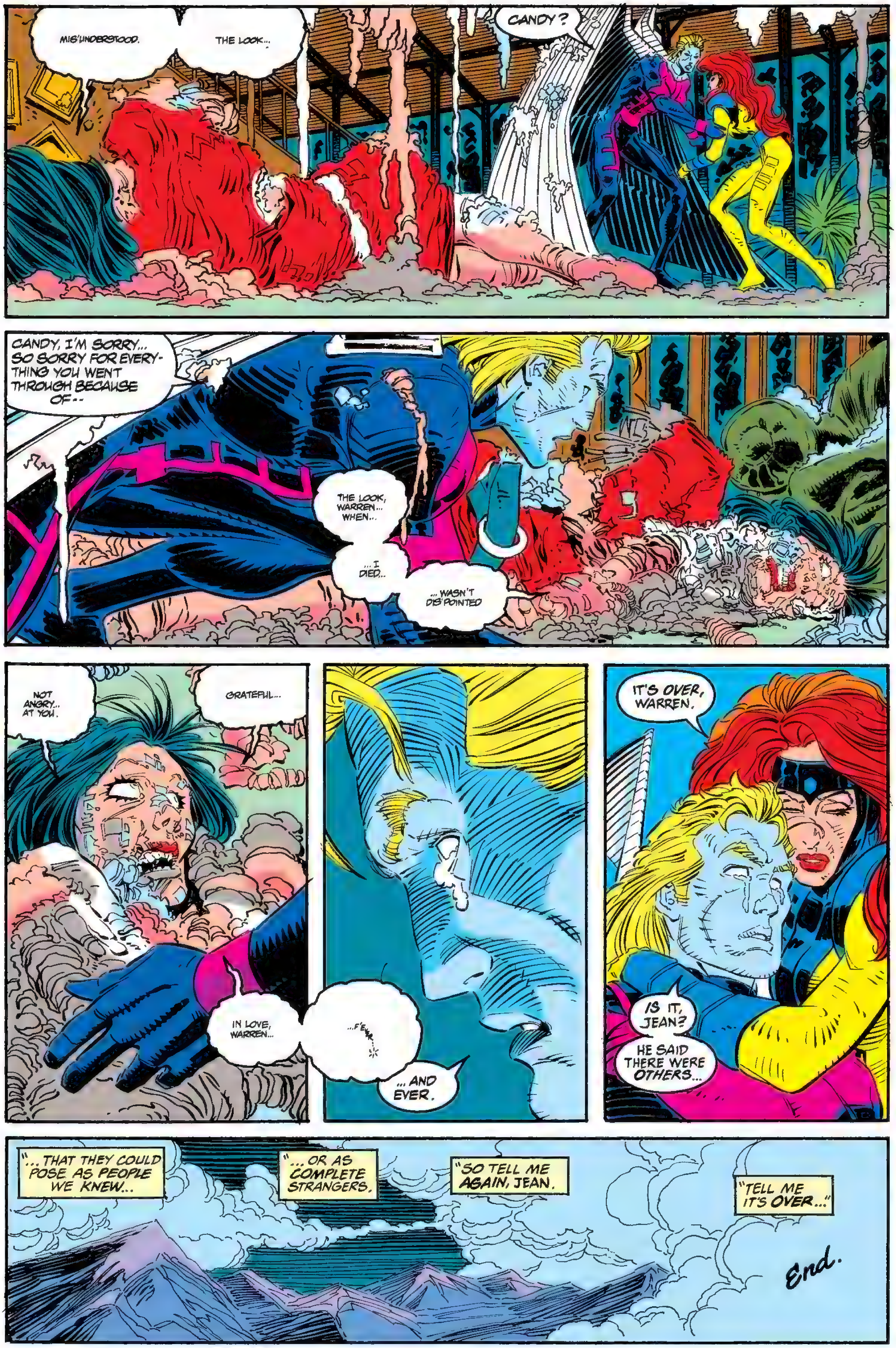
JEAN?!
ARRGH!
PSIONIC EXPLOSION! A... FAILSAFE PLANTED IN CANDY'S MIND--
--SET TO DETONATE IF WE GOT TOO CLOSE!
BRAVO, MS. GREY! MUCHO BRAVO!
IF I HAD HANDS, I'D BE TEMPTED TO APPLAUD.
IN FACT, IF YOU WILL GIVE ME JUST A MOMENT--
-- I'D BE MORE THAN WILLING TO ACCOMMODATE YOU IN THAT REGARD--
--JUST AS YOU HELPED ME BY TAKING MS. SOUTHERN INTO LA CASA DE WORTHINGTON.
WARREN... ITS PSI-SIGNATURE..?!
I DON'T NEED TO KNOW... ANYMORE THAN I HAVE TO GET AROUND THAT VOICE.
NO MATTER WHAT HE LOOKS LIKE, NO MATTER WHAT HE HAS BECOME...

... I RECOGNIZE CAMERON HODGE!
I'D BE INSULTED IF YOU DIDN'T, CHAP.
IT WOULD BE THE HEIGHT OF EMBARRASSMENT TO ALLOW MYSELF TO BE RECONSTRUCTED...
... FROM ALMOST NOTHING...
... AGREE TO VANGUARD A CLOSET-MOVEMENT INTENT ON WIPING MUTANTS, AT LAST, FROM THE FACE OF THE PLANET...
... CONVINCE MY... "SPONSOR"... TO TEST OUR PERFORMANCE ON MY DEAREST FRIEND...
... ONLY TO DISCOVER I'M NOTHING MORE THAN A DISTANT MEMORY.
SOMEONE SPENT MILLIONS OF DOLLARS TO ENGINEER THE GENOCIDE OF HOMO SUPERIOR, WARREN--
--I'D HATE TO THINK HE WASN'T GETTING HIS MONEY'S WORTH!
DON'T CALL ME WARREN, HODGE!
THAT WAS MY NAME WHEN WE WERE FRIENDS! BEFORE YOU HAD MY ORIGINAL WINGS AMPUTATED!
BEFORE YOU SOLD YOUR BODY AND SOUL TO PURGE THE WORLD OF WHAT YOU PERCEIVED WAS A THREAT TO HUMANITY!


...BEFORE I BECAME ARCHANGEL -- THE HARBINGER OF DEATH!
SQUARK!
SELF FUNCTIONS TERM --
T--TER--TERM--
SCHRRIPP!
ARRGH! ARCHANGEL, PLEASE. YOU AND I CAME UP THROUGH THE RANKS OF ATROCITY-DOM TOGETHER!
REMEMBER OUR ROOTS... BOARDING SCHOOL BUDDIES WITH VISIONS OF CHANGING THE WORLD --OF MAKING A DIFFERENCE?
OKAY, SO YOU WANTED TO SAVE THE WORLD FOR MUTANTS AND I WANTED TO CLEANSE IT OF THE SAME-- TRUE...
... BUT NO ROOMMATE SITUATION IS EVER PERFECT!
NOW, AS ONE TECHNO-ORGANIC MONSTER TO ANOTHER...
...CAN'T YOU SHOW A LITTLE PROFESSIONAL COURTESY?
I'M NOT A MONSTER!
DESPITE EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE --
--FROM STEALING MY FORTUNE TO MURDERING CANDY...
... THE ONE THING YOU COULDN'T DESTROY WAS MY HUMANITY!
BREEPT
YEAH, WAR...
...YOU'RE JUS' BRIMMING
EAEK!
WITH HUMANITY.
NOO!
WHA -- WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME?!
HODGE, WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO HER?!
WOULD YOU BELIEVE...
...STRIPPING HER FOR SPARE PARTS?
SEE, MS SOUTHERN AND I...
...ARE ON THE SAME "WARRENTY."
SIMPATICO, IF YOU WILL.


I... WON'T... BE... ...USED... ...AGAIN!
CAREFUL THERE, MISSY-MISS--
--YOU HURT YOURSELF, AND YOU'RE OF NO USE TO ME!
NOW BE A DEAR AND GRAB AN INTESTINE, NO?
WASN'T IT ENOUGH YOU KILLED ME, CAMERON?!
YOU HAD TO BRING ME BACK...?
YOU HAD TO TURN ME INTO... THIS?!
I'M NOT THE ONE WHO FELL IN LOVE WITH GENETRASH LIKE WARREN WORTHINGTON, WAS I?
JEAN...?!
I'M HERE, CANDY...
...USING MY MENTAL POWERS TO SHUT DOWN YOUR NERVE ENDINGS--
--TO SPARE YOU THE TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF PAIN YOU'RE FEELING!
VERY WELL THEN, IF YOU INSIST ON TEARING YOURSELF TO SHREDS--
--I WILL MAKE DO WITH NON-ORGANIC FODDER FOR THE MOMENT!
TAKE A LOOK, X-MEN... FOR THIS IS THE FACE OF YOUR FUTURE ENEMY!
THERE ARE SCORES OF US, CREATED WITH A TECHNOLOGY FAR MORE DEVELOPED THAN EVEN THAT OF YOUR PRECIOUS SHI'AR!
WE CAN PASS FOR HUMAN--
--WE CAN FEED FOREVER UPON THE ENVIRONMENT AROUND US--
--AND WE WILL NOT REST UNTIL MANKIND IS FREE OF THE HORROR THAT ARE MUTANTS!


BOURACCKT!
STOP, WOMAN--THE DESECRATION OF YOUR MAINFRAME--
IS OVERRIDING MY FAILSAFES!
IT WAS YOUR IDEA TO LINK US, CAMERON!
IF THIS IS THE ONLY WAY I CAN PROTECT WARREN AND THE OTHERS...
BUT--
IF I DIE-- YOU DIE!
I'VE BEEN DEAD...
...THIS JUST MAKES IT WORTH IT!
YOUR SACRIFICE IS WASTED!
THIS WON'T STOP US! THIS WON'T--
THE WORDS THAT BELONGED TO THE THING ONCE KNOWN AS CAMERON HODGE--
--ARE LOST TO THE CACOPHONY OF A TECHNO-ORGANIC MAELSTORM.
BRAFLOOM!


MIS'UNDERSTOOD.
THE LOOK...
CANDY?
CANDY, I'M SORRY... SO SORRY FOR EVERYTHING YOU WENT THROUGH BECAUSE OF--
THE LOOK, WARREN... WHEN...
...I DIED...
...WASN'T DIS'POINTED
NOT ANGRY... AT YOU.
GRATEFUL...
IN LOVE, WARREN...
...F'EVER...
...AND EVER.
IT'S OVER, WARREN.
IS IT, JEAN?
HE SAID THERE WERE OTHERS...
"...THAT THEY COULD POSE AS PEOPLE WE KNEW...
"...OR AS COMPLETE STRANGERS.
"SO TELL ME AGAIN, JEAN.
"TELL ME IT'S OVER..."
End.

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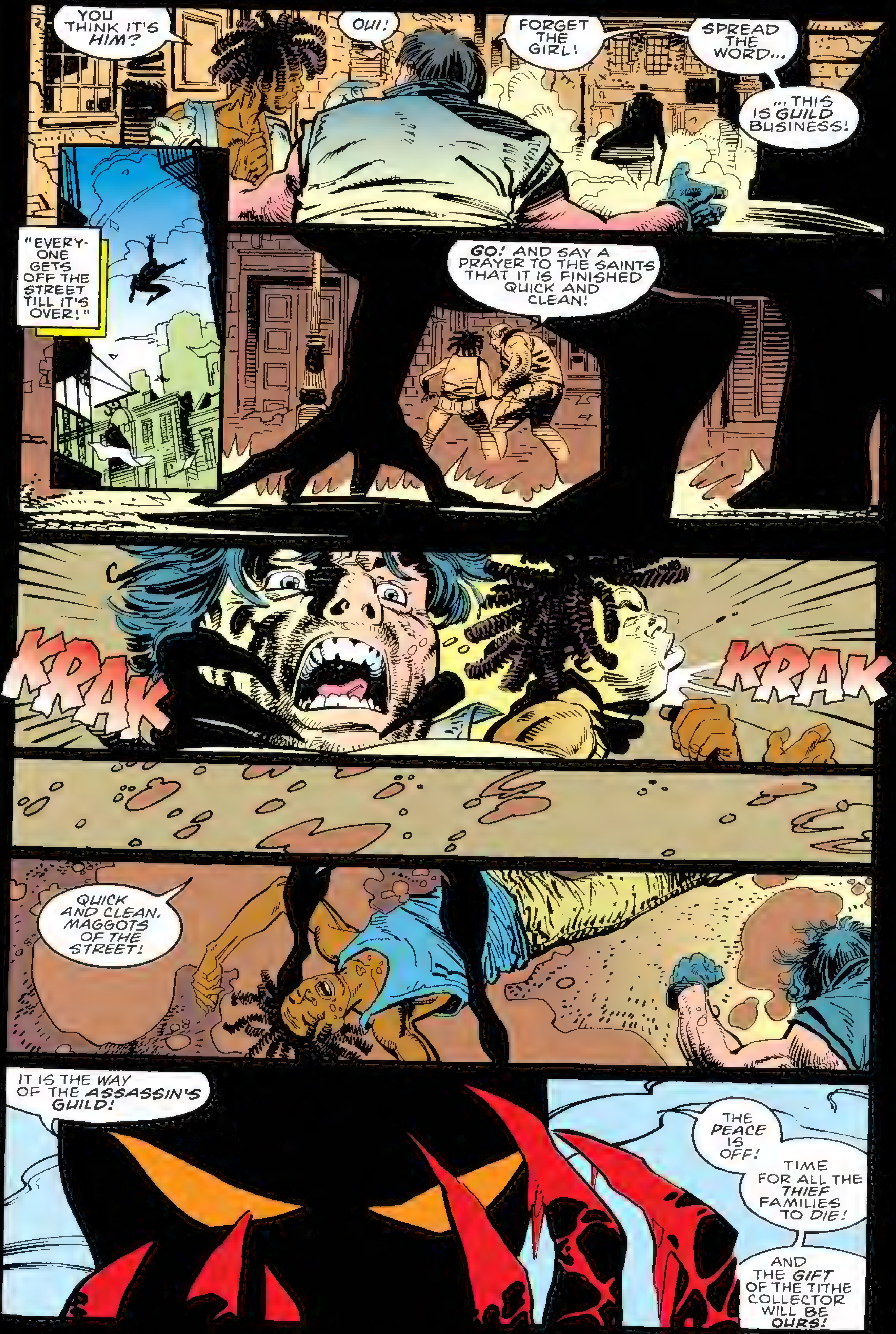
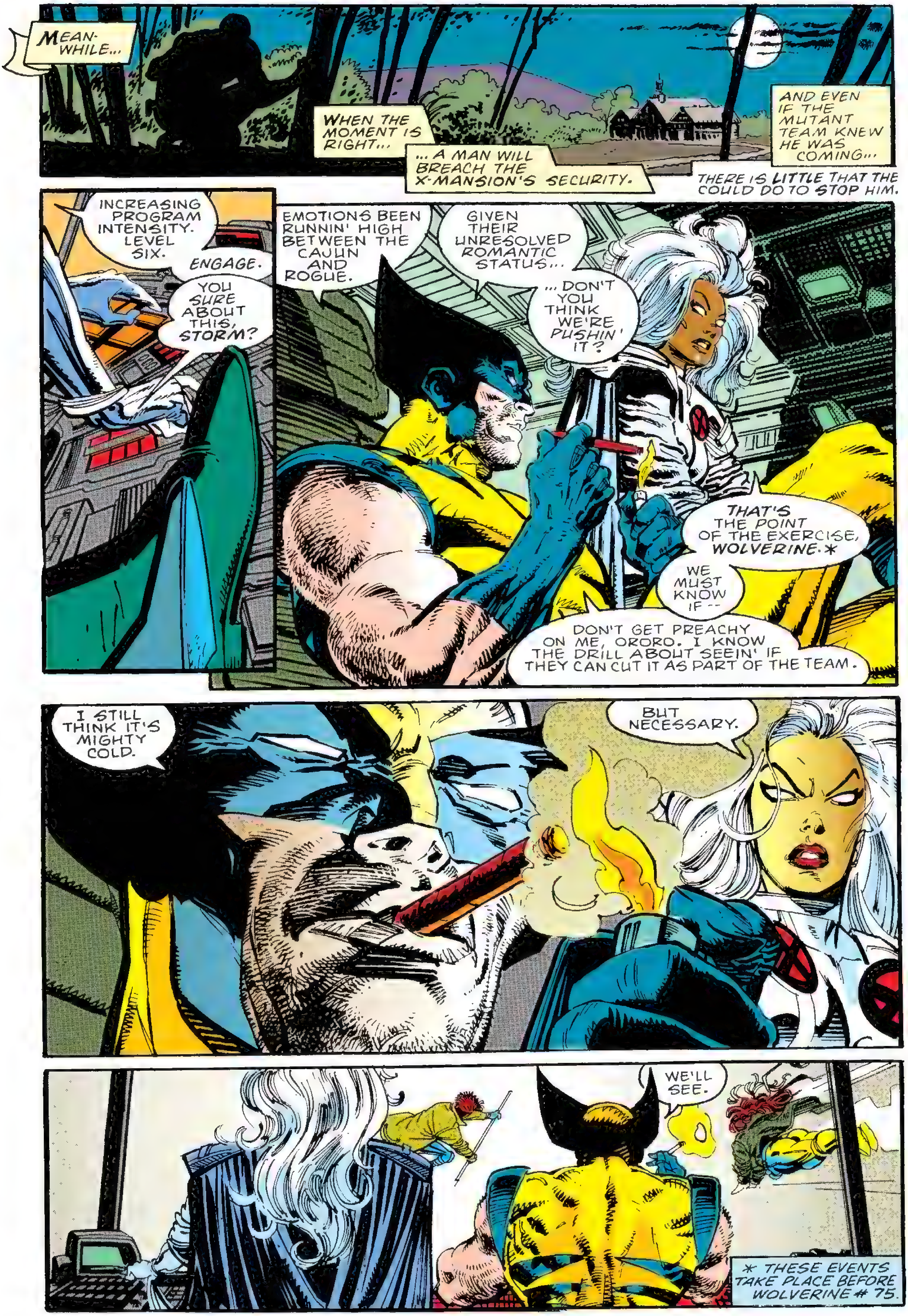
CREOLE MOTHERS IN THE FRENCH QUARTER OF NEW ORLEANS TELL THE STORY OF THE STRANGE, DARK MAN WHO ROLLS IN WITH THE FOG OFF THE MISSISSIPPI ONCE EVERY SEVEN YEARS.
THE LEGEND IS USED TO FRIGHTEN BAD LITTLE CHILDREN.
FEW PEOPLE HAVE EVER ACTUALLY LAID EYES UPON THE STRANGER.
BUT ALL WHO HAVE GROWN UP ON THE STREETS REMEMBER THE TALES, HEARD ON THEIR MOMMA'S KNEES.
TALES OF...
...THE TITHE COLLECTOR.
HE WALKS THE STREETS TRAVELED BY FEW BUT THE MOST FOOLHARDY OF TOURISTS.
FAR AWAY FROM BOURBON STREET AND THE SOUND OF THE JAZZ BANDS.
IT HAS BEEN SEVEN YEARS.
TIME FOR ANOTHER "BUSINESS TRANSACTION."
WOE TO ANY WHO INTERFERE WITH THE TITHING.
"THE TITHE COLLECTOR IS GOIN' GET YOU IF YOU DON'T BE GOOD, CHILD!"
REMEMBER YOUR MOMMA'S WORDS...
...AND LIVE!


YOU THINK IT'S *HIM?*
OUI!
FORGET THE GIRL!
SPREAD THE WORD...
...THIS IS *GUILD* BUSINESS!
"EVERYONE GETS OFF THE STREET TILL IT'S OVER!"
GO! AND SAY A PRAYER TO THE SAINTS THAT IT IS FINISHED QUICK AND CLEAN!
KRAK
KRAK
QUICK AND CLEAN, MAGGOTS OF THE STREET!
IT IS THE WAY OF THE *ASSASSIN'S GUILD!*
THE *PEACE* IS OFF!
TIME FOR ALL THE *THIEF* FAMILIES TO *DIE!*
AND THE *GIFT* OF THE TITHE COLLECTOR WILL BE *OURS!*

TITHING
HOWARD MACKIE STORY • ART LEE WEEKS KLAUS JANSON INKS
BUCCELLATO COLORIST
STARKINGS LETTERER
HARRAS EDITOR
DeFALCO EDITOR IN CHIEF
XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS, WESTCHESTER, NEW YORK.
A LATE NIGHT TRAINING SESSION IN THE X-MEN'S DANGER ROOM.
TWO OF THAT NUMBER, GAMBIT AND ROGUE, ARE BEING PUSHED TO THE FURTHEST LIMIT OF THEIR MUTANT SKILLS.
TENSION IN THE ROOM IS RUNNING HIGH.
GAMBIT CREATED BY CHRIS CLAREMONT AND JIM LEE
ONLY SOME OF IT IS DUE TO THE TRAINING SESSION.
[redacted]

BAKOOM
GOTCHA! AND NOW...
...HOLD TIGHT, CHERE!
I'LL BE HAVING YOU FREE AND FLYIN' AGAIN PRONTO!
'SCUSE ME, SUGAH...
...IF I DON'T NEED--
--OR WANT--
YOUR HELP!
WHOOM
TOO LATE, PETITE...
...BUT DON' WORRY, YOU DON'T HAVE TO THANK ME!
THOUGH... YOU, ME AND A CANDLE-LIT DINNER WOULD BE--
YOU WON'T BE GETTING ANY THANKS FROM ME, GAMBIT!
NOW WATCH YOUR MOUTH...
...AND YOUR BACK!


MEANWHILE...
WHEN THE MOMENT IS RIGHT...
...A MAN WILL BREACH THE X-MANSION'S SECURITY.
AND EVEN IF THE MUTANT TEAM KNEW HE WAS COMING...
THERE IS LITTLE THAT THE COULD DO TO STOP HIM.
INCREASING PROGRAM INTENSITY. LEVEL SIX.
ENGAGE.
YOU SURE ABOUT THIS, STORM?
EMOTIONS BEEN RUNNIN' HIGH BETWEEN THE CAJUN AND ROGUE.
GIVEN THEIR UNRESOLVED ROMANTIC STATUS...
...DON'T YOU THINK WE'RE PUSHIN' IT?
THAT'S THE POINT OF THE EXERCISE, WOLVERINE.*
WE MUST KNOW IF --
DON'T GET PREACHY ON ME, ORORO. I KNOW THE DRILL ABOUT SEEIN' IF THEY CAN CUT IT AS PART OF THE TEAM.
I STILL THINK IT'S MIGHTY COLD.
BUT NECESSARY.
WE'LL SEE.
* THESE EVENTS TAKE PLACE BEFORE WOLVERINE #75.

THE MOON SLIPS BEHIND A CLOUD.
DARKNESS IS THE ALLY OF THE MAN WHO SPRINGS FORWARD INTO ACTION.
THE SECURITY SYSTEM OF THE MANSION IS COMPLEX AND NEARLY IMPENETRABLE.
MOST WOULD NOT MAKE IT PAST THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE.
MOST WOULD NOT TRY.
SMOOTH, FOCUSED MOVEMENTS MAKE THE IMPOSSIBLE APPEAR EASY.
PAUSING TO CATCH HIS BREATH, THE MAN OFFERS A PRAYER TO THE SAINTS THAT FUTURE JOBS WILL BE LESS TAXING.
THOUGH, HE WOULD ADMIT THIS TO NO ONE.
COME, CHERE... SMILE!
THERE'S NO REASON FOR US NOT TO BE HAVING FUN WITH THIS LITTLE GAME!
GAMBIT! THIS IS THE DANGER ROOM! AND...
...IT'S NO GAME!

Pah! YOU ARE TOO SERIOUS!
LIFE IS A GAME!
AND, IF YOU GIVE ME THE TIME...
...AND THE OPPORTUNITY...
...I'LL SHOW YOU...
...YOU...
GAMBIT! INCOMING! BEHIND YOU!
GAMBIT!
REMY!
SOMETHING HAS GONE WRONG. I AM INITIALIZING TERMINATION SEQUENCE--
NOT SO FAST, DARLIN'.
YOU WANTED TO SEE HOW THEY OPERATE UNDER COMBAT CONDITIONS...

"... LET IT PLAY. THEY CAN HANDLE IT."
FWAKOOM
SEQUENCE END.
TOLD YA.
NOW ISN'T THIS A COZY LITTLE TÊTE À TÊTE, CHERE?
LOVE TO STAY HERE ALL DAY, BUT...
... IT'LL HAVE TO BE 'NOTHER TIME
WE GOT COMPANY.
GAMBIT, WHAT..?

WHOMP
THE SHADOWS OF THE MANSION REACH OUT AND EMBRACE THE INTRUDER.
HE MAKES NO SOUND...
...DISTURBS NOTHING.
...AS HE SILENTLY SLIPS THROUGH THE STILL NIGHT.
HIS PASSAGE IS NEARLY IMPERCEPTIBLE.
UNTIL...
Tsk! Tsk!
NOT GOOD ENOUGH, M'FRIEND.
NO MOVES.
WOULDN'T WANT YOU TO LOSE YOUR HEAD, Neh?
PUT DA CARD AWAY, REMY!
YOU STILL A THIEF, I HOPE...
...NOT AN ASSASSIN!

HENRI ?
HENRI!
YOU SON OF A THIEF! IT'S BEEN *TOO* LONG!
Pah! SECURITY !?!
EVERYTHING'S FINE. HENRI'S A *FRIEND* OF MINE FROM NEW ORLEANS.
WHY DIDN'T THE PROFESSOR OR *PSYLOCKE* PICK 'IM UP TELE-PATHICALLY?
HATE TO BREAK UP THE RE-UNION, BUT YOUR BUDDY BROKE THROUGH OUR SECURITY SYSTEM, CAJUN...
...AND I WANNA KNOW *HOW!*
AN' HOW DID *YOU* KNOW HE WAS HERE?
WE *ALL* HAVE OUR SECRETS, CHERE. NOW 'SCUSE US...
...WE NEED TO CATCH UP ON OLD TIMES.
TALK TO ME, HENRI.
I CAME FOR YOU, BRO'. IT'S THE *TITHING* TIME.
THE *GUILD*... ALL OF US... HAVE TO BE THERE, *TOGETHER.* EVEN YOU, HOTHEADED ONE.
THE STINKIN' ASSASSINS BE AT IT AGAIN.
BUT THE *PEACE?*
BROKEN. AFTER YOUR LAST TRIP DOWN TO THE BIG EASY, T'INGS HAVE BEEN GETTIN' UGLY.
THE STINKIN' BRUDDA O' YA WIFE HAS STIRRED T'INGS UP AGAIN.
JULIEN?! HE'S DEAD! I SAW HIM DIE!

NOT ALL T'INGS ARE AS DEY *SEEM*, BRO'.
YOU KNOW DAT!
COME HOME, REMY. IT'S *FAMILY*. AIN'T NOTHIN' MORE ***IMPORTANT*** THAN THAT!
FWOOOSHT
HENRI!
IT'S ***THEM***, REMY... THE *ASSASSIN'S GUILD*...
...THEY DON'T WANT THE TITHING TO TAKE PLACE...
YOU'RE *NEEDED*. YOU KNOW DERE WAYS... DON'T LET DEM GET IT... IT'S OURS...
WE'VE EARNED IT... ***USE*** WHAT YOU KNOW... FIND OUT WHAT YOU DON'T!
WHAT I KNEW OF THE ASSASSINS DIED WITH ***BELLA DONNA***, HENRI.
I'M SORRY.
NOT ALL T'INGS ARE AS DEY SEEM, BRO'.
GO SEE FOR YOURSELF...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, HENRI? WHAT ABOUT BELL--
TAKE ME... HOME, REMY...
...TAKE ME TO OUR FATHER...
YES... BROTHER.

I GOT THEIR SCENT.
TWO OF 'EM, HEADING TOWARD SALEM CENTER.
WE CAN CATCH THEM EASY.
NO.
I GO ALONE.
THIS IS A FAMILY MATTER.
HENRI LeBEAU WAS MY *BROTHER*!
I'M GOIN' WITH HIM!
WE *ALL* SHOULD!
WOLVERINE! *WHAT?!*
NO, DARLIN', WE STAY.
IT'S WHAT HE WANTS.
THE CAJUN'S GOTTA HANDLE THIS HIM-SELF.
IT'S A *BLOOD* DEBT.
AND I PITY THOSE ON THE RECEIVING END!

NEW ORLEANS.
IN A CHAMBER, FAR BELOW THE DARK COBBLESTONE STREETS OF THE FRENCH QUARTER...
...THE HIGH COUNCIL OF THE THIEVES GUILD GATHER AND MAKE PREPARATIONS FOR COMING EVENTS.
THE TITHE COLLECTOR OF OUR BENEFACTRESS WILL SOON ARRIVE. THE CEREMONY WILL COMMENCE TOMORROW.
ALL OUR FAMILIES HAVE BEEN SENT WORD TO RETURN WITH THEIR TRIBUTE.
FOR SOME, IT WILL BE THE FIRST TASTING OF THE ELIXIR.
I PROPOSE THAT REMY LEBEAU BE PERMITTED TO ACCEPT IT THIS YEAR.
NO DISRESPECT, JEAN-LUC, BUT REMY?
HE IS YOUNG, BRASH, IMPULSIVE AND NOT TRULY ONE OF OURS.
LET US SEE IF HE EVEN HAS THE COURTESY TO HONOR HIS FAMILY WITH HIS PRESENCE.
LET US SEE.
PARIS, FRANCE...
THE WOMAN NAMED CANDRA GAZES OUT UPON THE CITY OF LIGHTS.
IN HER LONG LIFE, SHE HAS SEEN MANY NEW LIGHTS ADDED TO THE PARISIAN SKYLINE.
FOR SHE IS MUTANT WITH THE ADDITIONAL GIFT OF LONG LIFE.
SHE IS AN EXTERNAL.

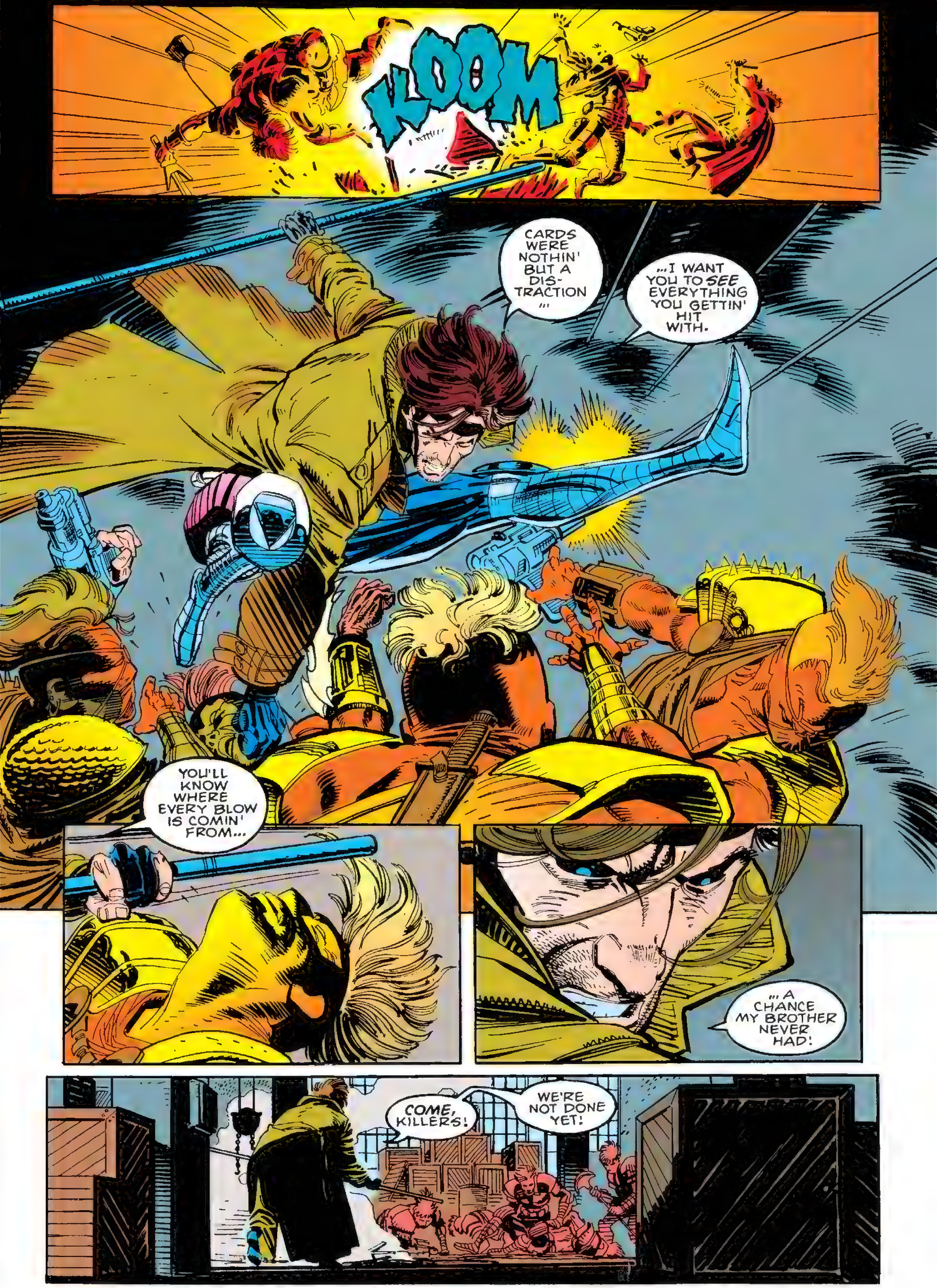
EVERYTHING GOING AS PLANNED, BEAUTIFUL ONE?
IT ALWAYS DOES, GIDEON.
NOTHING EVER TRULY CHANGES FOR US.
AT TIMES, I CRAVE FOR SOME *EXCITEMENT* IN THIS LONG LIFE.
WHO KNOWS? PERHAPS ONE DAY SOON...
THE WOODS OUTSIDE SALEM CENTER...
...ASSASSINS FLEE INTO THE NIGHT.
ADRENALINE COURSES THROUGH THEIR BODIES AS THEY SEEK TO EVADE THEIR PURSUER.
AND WHEN EVASION DOES NOT WORK...

...THEY TURN AND FIGHT.
YOU WILL DIE, T'IEF!
FRAKOOM
NO.
MY BROTHER HAD HIS LIFE STOLEN BY YOU, ASSASSIN!
YOU HAVE BROKEN A PEACE I SACRIFICED MUCH TO MAINTAIN.
I WON'T BE DYING UNTIL I GET ANSWERS!
BWOOM
SO LET'S FINISH THIS LI'L GAME AND I GET WHAT I WANT, EH?

Ah! NOW WE PLAY HIDE-AND-SEEK?
Hmmm!
STEEL REINFORCED DOOR...
...AND A HEAVY DUTY LOCK.
A FORMIDABLE OBSTACLE...
...IF YOUR PURSUER WAS NOT A THIEF...
...AND A MUTANT.
PICKING A LOCK WAS NEVER SO EASY.
IF NOT SO SUBTLE!
ARE YOU WAITING IN THE DARK FOR ME, AS-SASINS?
I'M COMING.

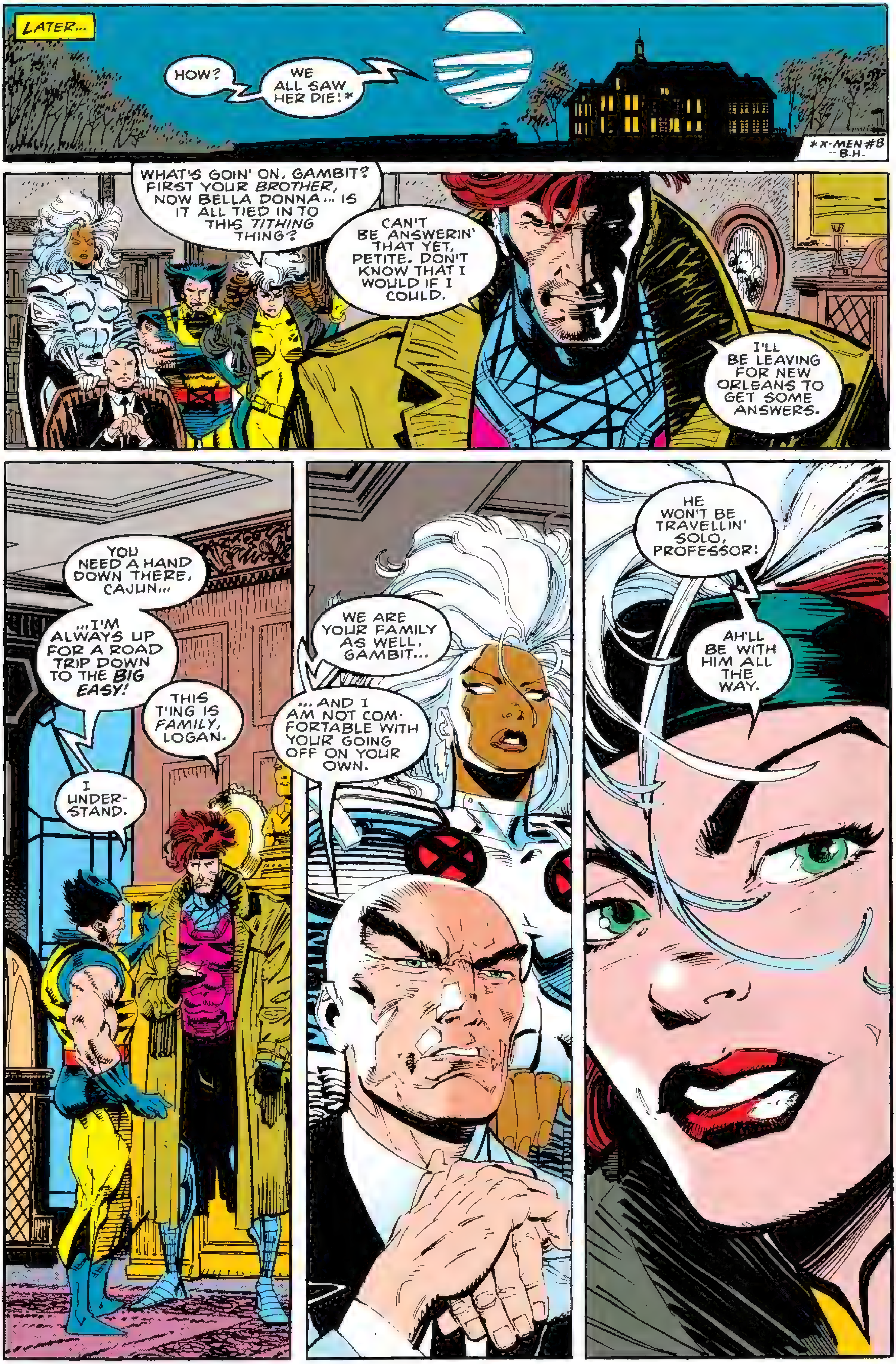
THE OCCUPANTS OF THE X-MANSION MOURN THE PASSING OF A THIEF THEY NEVER KNEW.
...AND FEAR FOR THE SAFETY OF ONE WHOM THEY CALL THEIR OWN.
HE'LL BE ALL RIGHT, KID.
THERE'S MORE TO THE CAJUN THAN ANY OF US REALLY KNOWS.
I LOVE HIM, WOLVERINE.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A TELEPATH TO HAVE FIGURED *THAT* ONE OUT, DARLIN'.
THIS THING HE'S DOING TONIGHT... HE'S GOT TO DO IT *ALONE*.
BUT AFTER TONIGHT, DON'T LET HIM BE ALONE AGAIN.
THERE'S SOMETHIN' BETWEEN YOU TWO.
MARIKO AND I HAD THE SAME.
DON'T WANT TO WAIT UNTIL CONDITIONS ARE PERFECT...
...'CAUSE WITH THE LIKES OF US, THEY NEVER ARE.

WHERE ARE Y'ALL HIDIN', *MURDERERS?*
YOU GOOD AT KILLIN' FROM A DISTANCE...
...HOW 'BOUT TRYIN' IT UP CLOSE AND *PERSONAL*?
I'M WAITIN'...
COWARDS!
VVRAP
LOOK HERE... YOU *FINALLY* DECIDIN' TO CLIMB OUT OF THE DARK PLACES.
FIGURIN' YOU CAN HANDLE ONE THIEF, *EH?*
WELL...
...LET THE *CARDS* FALL WHERE THEY MAY!


KOOM
CARDS WERE NOTHIN' BUT A DISTRACTION...
...I WANT YOU TO *SEE* EVERYTHING YOU GETTIN' HIT WITH.
YOU'LL KNOW WHERE EVERY BLOW IS COMIN' FROM...
...A CHANCE MY BROTHER NEVER HAD!
COME, KILLERS!
WE'RE NOT DONE YET!

BRAVO, REMY!
YOU STILL FIGHT MORE LIKE AN *ASSASSIN* THAN A *T'IEF!*
WHICH *ARE* YOU?
JULIEN? IT CAN'T BE ...I SAW YOU--
DIE, REMY? BY YOUR SWORD?
WELL, SOMEONE SHOWED ME DEATH DON'T HAVE TO BE *FOREVER!*
WHAT SAY WE *FINISH* OUR DUEL, REMY?
NO, JULIEN... IF IT IS *TRULY* YOU...
...KILLING YOU ONCE WAS MORE THAN ENOUGH.
KLANG
THE *SECOND* TIME PRESENTS NO CHALLENGE ...
...AND LITTLE PROFIT!
I DON'T KNOW *HOW*, OR *WHY*, YOU ARE STILL ALIVE, BUT...
SCHWISH
...THIS IS FOR HENRI!

No!
YOU WON'T BE STEALIN' MY *HONOR* AGAIN!
JULIEN --
--DON'T!
LOOKIN' PALE, REMY.
KNOW THAT IT IS ME, YOUR WIFE'S BROTHER!
YOU WON'T BE KILLIN' ME AGAIN, MON AMI! I AM HERE TO STAY!
JULIEN! THE PORTAL IS OPEN...
...LET'S RETURN!
I'VE GOT A JOB TO DO, T'IEF! FOR MY SISTER, REMY.
BELLA DONNA ALMOST DIED BECAUSE OF YOU, BUT I'VE KEPT HER ALIVE.
WE ASSASSINS GOT THE POWER...
...YOU T'IEFS GOT THE LIFE.
IT'S TIME FOR US TO HAVE BOTH!
AND I'LL KILL ALL THE T'IEFS TO GET IT.
FOR MY SISTER. FOR ME. FOR ALL ASSASSINS!
STAY AWAY FROM NEW ORLEANS, T'IEF AND STAY AWAY FROM MY SISTER...
...OR *DIE* WITH THE *REST* OF YOUR STINKIN' FAMILY!
BELLA DONNA...
...ALIVE?


LATER...
HOW?
WE ALL SAW HER DIE!*
* X-MEN #8 --B.H.
WHAT'S GOIN' ON, GAMBIT? FIRST YOUR *BROTHER*, NOW BELLA DONNA... IS IT ALL TIED IN TO THIS *TITHING* THING?
CAN'T BE ANSWERIN' THAT YET, PETITE. DON'T KNOW THAT I WOULD IF I COULD.
I'LL BE LEAVING FOR NEW ORLEANS TO GET SOME ANSWERS.
YOU NEED A HAND DOWN THERE, CAJUN...
...I'M ALWAYS UP FOR A ROAD TRIP DOWN TO THE *BIG EASY!*
THIS T'ING IS *FAMILY*, LOGAN.
I UNDERSTAND.
WE ARE YOUR FAMILY AS WELL, GAMBIT...
...AND I AM NOT COMFORTABLE WITH YOUR GOING OFF ON YOUR OWN.
HE WON'T BE TRAVELLIN' SOLO, PROFESSOR!
AH'LL BE WITH HIM ALL THE WAY.

YOU THINK Y'ALL ARE MAN ENOUGH TO STOP ME?
NO.
SOMEDAY YOU'LL FIND OUT JUST HOW MUCH OF A MAN I AM, CHERE! UNTIL THEN...
...COME IF YOU WANT, BUT KNOW I AM GOING TO FIND OUT IF BELLA DONNA, MY *WIFE*, IS ALIVE.
AND YOU BETTER BE REAL SURE YOU'RE UP TO THIS ONE, CHERE!
THERE ARE SOME T'INGS ABOUT ME THAT YOU MAY NOT *WANT* TO LEARN!
I'LL TAKE THE CHANCE ON THAT ONE, SUGAH!
GRAB YOUR BABIES, CREOLE MOTHERS.
SHUT YOUR DOORS AGAINST THE SPREADING FOG.
THE TITHE COLLECTOR WALKS THE STREETS OF THE FRENCH QUARTER.
BEWARE...
...THE TITHING TIME.
TO BE CONTINUED

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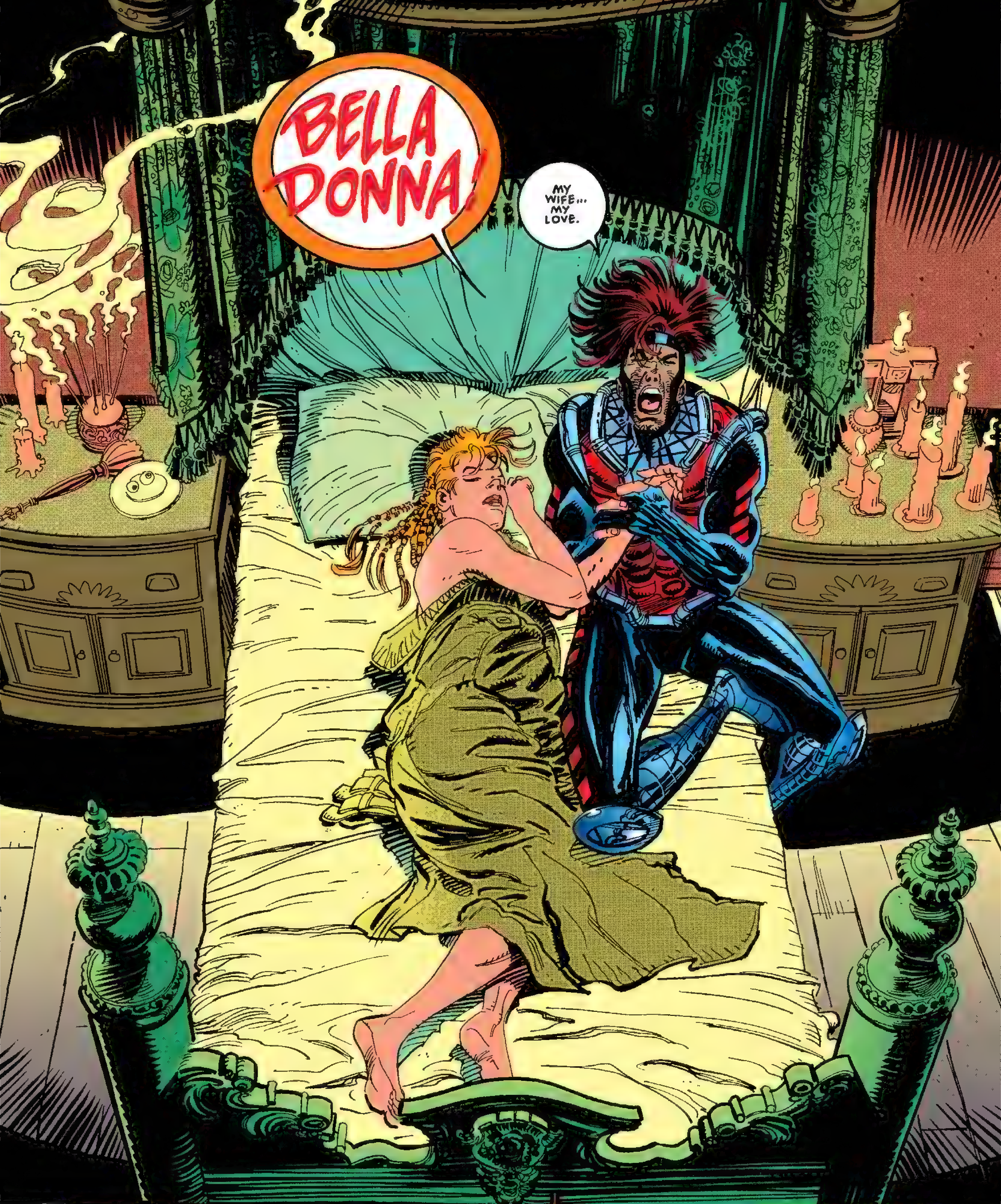
GAMBIT
LEE WEEKS

ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY OF NEW ORLEANS... ON THE RIVER ROAD, WITHIN SIGHT OF THE MISSISSIPPI...
DIS PLACE HASN'T CHANGED.
A
NEITHER HAS WHAT PASSES FOR SECURITY.
BEEN SNEAKIN' IN JUST LIKE THIS SINCE I WAS A PUP.
NOBODY, BUT ONE, WAS WELCOMING ME INSIDE BACK THEN.
AND I'M SURE NONE OF THEM INSIDE WILL BE ROLLIN' OUT A RED CARPET FOR THE RETURN OF DIS THIEF TONIGHT.
TOO QUIET...
...LIKE A FUNERAL PARLOR.
THE HOUSE WAS ALWAYS FULL OF WILD GOIN'S ON WHEN SHE WAS ALIVE.
DREW ME TO HER LIKE A CANDLE TO A FLAME.
PEOPLE ALWAYS WARNIN' ME THAT I'D BE THE ONE TO GET BURNT.
BELLE.

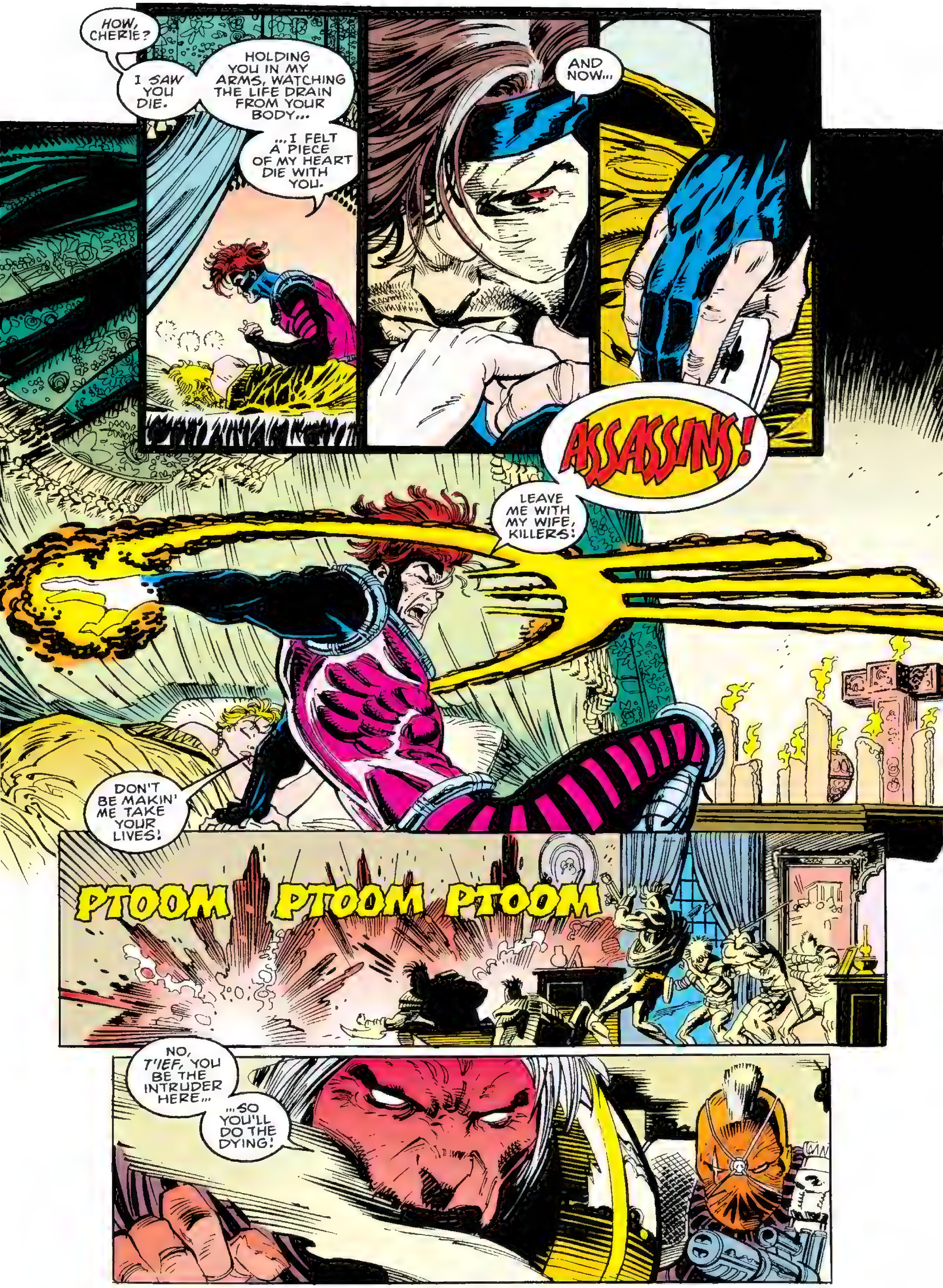
YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE THAT COULD BRING ME BACK TO DIS CITY.
YOU WERE THE ONLY REASON I STAYED AS LONG AS I DID.
AN' YOU WERE THE REASON I HAD TO LEAVE.
NOW I'M SEARCHIN' FOR THE GHOSTS OF MY YOUTH.
IT'S TRUE...
...YOU'RE ALIVE, CHERIE...
...YOU ARE ALIVE.


BELLA DONNA!
MY WIFE... MY LOVE.

HONOR amongst THIEVES

STORY/ART **HOWARD MACKIE** / **LEE WEEKS** / **KLAUS JANSON**

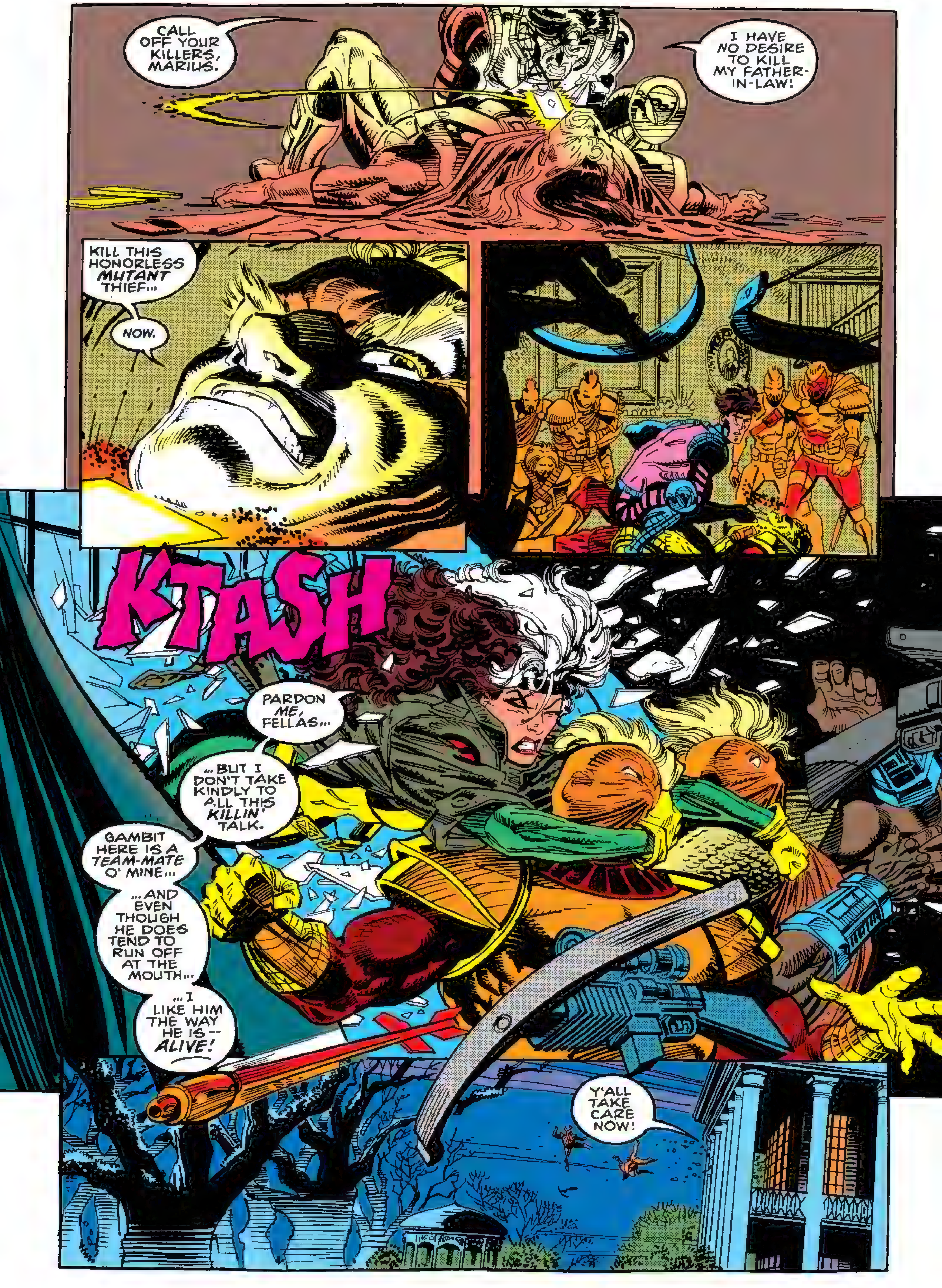
COLORIST **STEVE BUCCELLATO** LETTERER **RICHARD STARKINGS** EDITOR **BOB HARRAS** CHIEF **TOM DeFALCO**


HOW, CHERIE?
I SAW YOU DIE.
HOLDING YOU IN MY ARMS, WATCHING THE LIFE DRAIN FROM YOUR BODY...
...I FELT A PIECE OF MY HEART DIE WITH YOU.
AND NOW...
ASSASSINS!
LEAVE ME WITH MY WIFE, KILLERS!
DON'T BE MAKIN' ME TAKE YOUR LIVES!
PTOOM PTOOM PTOOM
NO, T'IEF, YOU BE THE INTRUDER HERE...
...SO YOU'LL DO THE DYING!

Dah! FOR A LONG TIME I BE HEARIN' THAT TRASH FROM THE LIKES OF YOU!
ASSASSINS ALWAYS TALKIN' ABOUT KILLIN' LI'L OL' REMY LEBEAU!
SAYIN' I AIN'T GOOD ENOUGH TO MARRY NO ASSASSIN WOMAN!
'CEPT THE WOMAN, SHE WAN' TO MARRY ME.
BEST OF YOU NEVER COULD TAKE ME IN A FAIR FIGHT!
THAT'S WHEN I LEARNED TO FIGHT NONE TOO FAIR!
NOTHIN'S CHANGED, EH!
EVERYTHING'S CHANGED... GAMBIT!

MY BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER HOVERS NEAR THE EDGE OF DEATH BECAUSE OF YOU AND YOUR NEW COMRADES.
TWO OF MY CHILDREN YOU HAVE TAKEN FROM ME, SO...
...I WILL HAVE THE PLEASURE OF TAKING YOUR LIFE IN A DUEL OF *HONOR*, SIR!
PICK UP THE SWORD, LEBEAU.
MARIUS, I DID NOT COME HERE TO DUEL WITH YOU --
THEN YOU SHOULD ***NOT*** HAVE COME AT ALL, SON-IN-LAW.
NO MORE WORDS! PICK UP THE SWORD *IF* YOU HAVE ANY HONOR.
OR DON'T YOU EVEN HAVE THE HONOR OF A THIEF? *NO*... YOU ARE NOT TRULY ONE OF THEIRS, ARE YOU?
YOU ARE JUST A ***MUTANT OUTSIDER*** PICKED UP... OR WAS IT *STOLEN*..? WHEN YOU WERE BUT A BABE. AN *ADOPTED* THIEF!
Pah! A ***DEAD*** THIEF!
ALL RIGHT. WE FIGHT THEN.

BUT YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT YOUR SON, JULIEN, IS NOT DEAD.
LAST NIGHT, HE AND I FOUGHT AFTER HE HAD MURDERED MY BROTHER, HENRI.
THE OUTCOME WAS NOT TO HIS ADVANTAGE.
BUT IT WAS HE WHO SENT ME DOWN HERE...
...BY WARNING ME TO STAY AWAY!
THAT THING IS NOT MY SON!
MY SON WAS A MAN OF HONOR.
YOU TOOK HIS HONOR, AND HIS LIFE, AWAY FROM HIM, THIEF!
THE CREATURE WHICH WALKS AS MY SON WALKED WOULD BETRAY HIS FAMILY, HIS FATHER, HIS GUILD!
IT IS AN ABOMINATION THAT MUST BE DESTROYED.
I DIDN'T COME HERE TO ARGUE ABOUT EVENTS OF THE PAST WITH MY FATHER-IN-LAW.
THIS FIGHT...
...ENDS...
...NOW.
POOM


CALL OFF YOUR KILLERS, MARIUS.
I HAVE NO DESIRE TO KILL MY FATHER-IN-LAW!
KILL THIS HONORLESS *MUTANT* THIEF...
NOW.
KTASH
PARDON *ME,* FELLAS...
...BUT I DON'T TAKE KINDLY TO ALL THIS *KILLIN'* TALK.
GAMBIT HERE IS A *TEAM-MATE* O' MINE...
...AND EVEN THOUGH HE DOES TEND TO RUN OFF AT THE MOUTH...
...I LIKE HIM THE WAY HE IS -- *ALIVE!*
Y'ALL TAKE CARE NOW!

ROGUE, MA CHERIE, I ASKED YOU TO STAY OUT OF DIS!
ASKIN' AIN'T GETTIN', REMY!
'SIDES, THERE SEEMS TO BE MORE THAN ENOUGH O' THIS HERE LITTLE GAME FOR BOTH OF US!
ugph!
M'SWEET, AS YOU RECENTLY POINTED OUT T'ME IN THE DANGER ROOM...
...THIS IS NO GAME!
ASSASSINS ALWAYS PLAY FOR KEEPS!
BUT, FORTUNATELY, SO DO THIEVES!
AND X-MEN!
Touché.

I'LL BE TAKIN' MY WIFE NOW.
NOW YOU STEAL MY DAUGHTER, THIEF!
IF YOU REALLY WANT TO SAVE BELLA DONNA...
...THEN LET HER TASTE THE PRECIOUS ELIXIR OF THE THIEVES.
ELIXIR?
I DON'T KNOW--
DO NOT INSULT ME, SIR!
WE ASSASSINS HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN ABOUT IT.
MANY HAVE WANTED IT FOR OURSELVES, BUT... THAT IS NOT TO BE.
A PACT WAS MADE LONG AGO.
WE GET THE POWER.
THE THIEVES GET THE ELIXIR OF LIFE.
GAMBIT, WHAT'S HE TALKIN' ABOUT?
OL' WIVES TALES AND LEGENDS, ROGUE. NOTHIN' MORE.
WHAT? YOU DON'T WANT YOUR MUTANT GIRLFRIEND TO HEAR THE TRUTH, REMY?
PERHAPS IT'S TIME FOR ALL TO KNOW THE TRUTH.

YOU KNOW THE ELIXIR CAN SAVE HER! TAKE HER TO YOUR GUILD FATHER. A *TASTE* IS *ALL* IT WOULD TAKE.
SAVE MY DAUGHTER, REMY LEBEAU... SAVE *YOUR WIFE!*
TOO MUCH TO ASK, EH? YOUR SECRETS CAN'T BE SHARED OUTSIDE THE GUILD? OR COULD YOU POSSIBLY *BETRAY* YOUR FAMILY FOR THE LIFE OF ONE YOU PROMISED TO CHERISH IN SICKNESS *AND* IN HEALTH..?
YOU WOULD HAVE TO GIVE UP ALL CLAIMS TO HONOR.
WE'LL BE OFF NOW.
LET ME TAKE HER, GAMBIT. IT'S A LONG WAY DOWN.
ROGUE... YOU SURE?
I'M SURE.
DO *RIGHT* BY MY DAUGHTER, LEBEAU!
GAMBIT AND ROGUE'S DEPARTURE IS OBSERVED FROM THE SHADOWS OF THE NIGHT...
...AND, AS THE SAYING GOES, "IF LOOKS COULD KILL..."

FOR NOW, THE BURNING RAGE IS DIRECTED ELSEWHERE.
SEPARATING HIMSELF FROM THE SHADOWS...
...THE DARK ASSASSIN SLIPS INSIDE...
...TO FACE THOSE HE ONCE CALLED FAMILY.
NOW AN OUTCAST AMONG KILLERS...
... AN ASSASSIN WITHOUT HONOR...
...HE IS THE ENEMY.
THE BATTLE IS SWIFT, EFFICIENT AND BRUTAL.
ONE BY ONE, ASSASSINS FALL BEFORE THE MURDEROUS ATTACK.
FRIENDS AND FAMILY ALIKE FALL BEFORE THE MURDEROUS ATTACK.
NONE ARE SPARED HIS RAGE.
THE BLOOD OF CHILDHOOD PLAYMATES MINGLES AT THE FEET OF ONE THEY ONCE CALLED BROTHER.
TONIGHT, THEIR WOMEN WILL WEEP.
FATHER, WE WILL HAVE WORDS.
I AM FATHER TO YOU NO LONGER, KILLER!
THE DAY YOU CAME INTO THIS WORLD IS A BLIGHT ON THE MEMORY OF YOUR DEAR MOTHER.
PUT AN END TO MY SUFFERING...
...KILL ME NOW, JULIEN!

FATHER...
...YOUR SUFFERING BE JUST BEGINNING!
YOU LET HIM TAKE MY BELOVED SISTER... AGAIN?
FOR THIS, KILLING YOU WOULD BE SO EASY.
YOU AND ALL THE WEAK ONES WHO CLAIM THE NAME *ASSASSIN.*
TIME'S COME FOR OUR GUILD TO BE RE-NEGOTIATIN' THE OLD PACTS.
THE POWERS AND THE LIFE CAN BE OURS.
HAVIN' HAD A TASTE OF *BOTH*... I WANT IT ALL.
YOU WILL *FAIL*, JULIEN! I WILL SEE TO IT.
YOU BE DOIN' *NOTHING*, FATHER! THE ELIXIR AND BELLA DONNA WILL BE MINE!
YOU WON'T BE POISONIN' HER MIND AGAINST ME NO MORE.
BELLA DONNA WILL SIT BY MY SIDE AT THE *NEW* ASSASSINS GUILD!
T'INK ABOUT THAT, FATHER!
SHRAK
DE OLD WAYS BE DEAD!

IN AN UNDERGROUND CHAMBER BENEATH THE FRENCH QUARTER...
...THE TITHING CEREMONY COMMENCES.
MEMBERS OF THE TEN FAMILIES OF THIEVES STAND READY TO PRESENT TRIBUTE TO THE TITHE COLLECTOR IN EXCHANGE FOR...
...LONG LIFE. IT IS OUR PACT.
IT IS YOUR RIGHT.
THE ELIXIR OF LIFE IN EXCHANGE FOR THE TITHE, JEAN-LUC LEBEAU.
BY THE GRACE OF CANDRA, THE BENEFACTRESS, I GIVE YOU THE FIRST VIAL --
FWAKOOOM
FATHER!
WE WILL HAVE WORDS!
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE, SUGAH?
FAMILY BUSINESS, ROGUE. YOU DO NOT HAVE T'BE HERE.
I'M NOT LEAVIN' YOU ON YOUR OWN AGAIN.

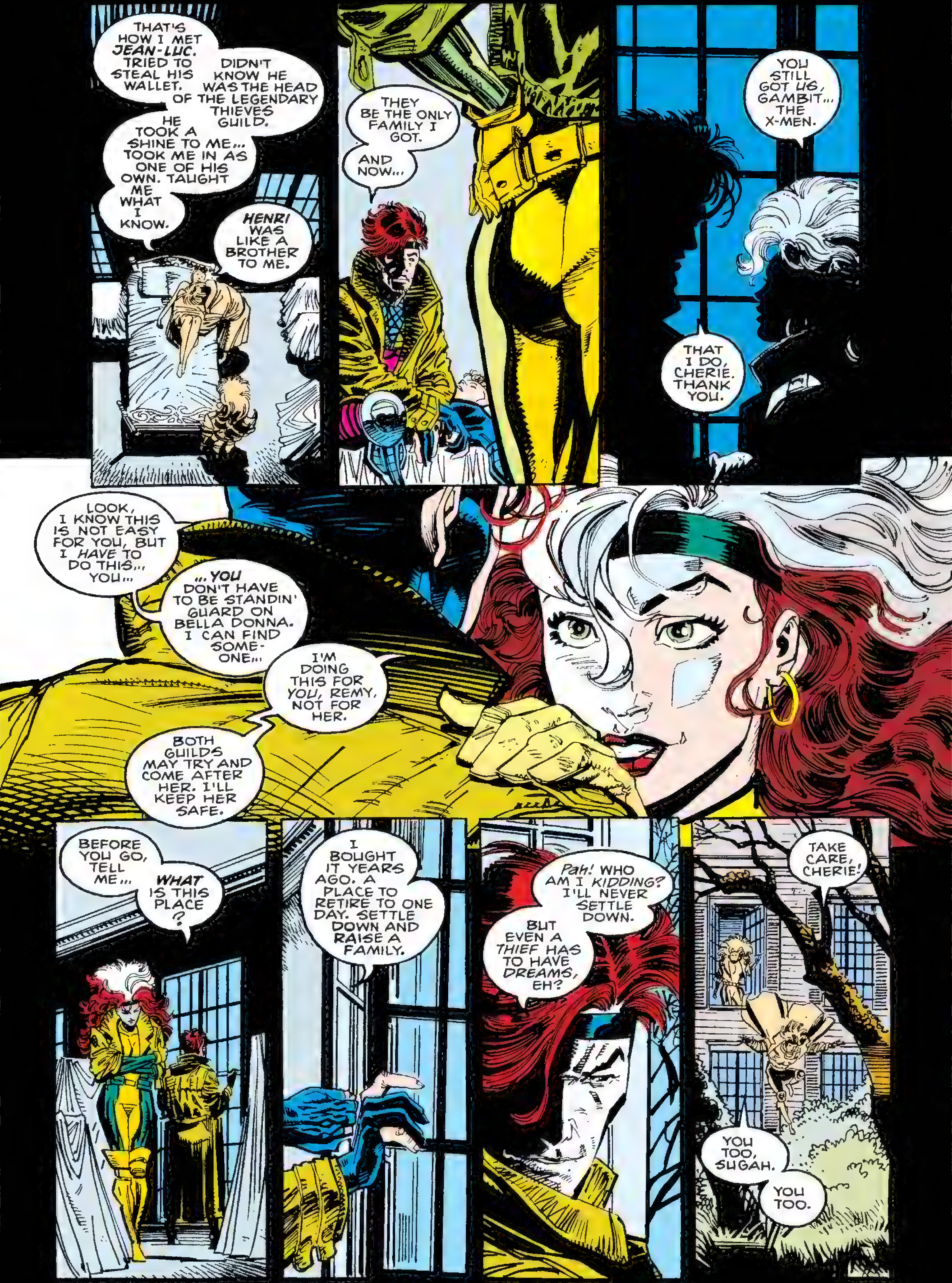
REMY! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?
THE TITHING CEREMONY...
...IS OVER.
SETTLE YOUR BUSINESS, QUICKLY, THIEVES, OR THE REMAINING ELIXIR RETURNS TO CANDRA...
...AND THE PACT IS BROKEN.
HE IS GONE!
THE ELIXIR?
YOU DARE DISRUPT THE ANCIENT CEREMONY, REMY LEBEAU?! FOR THIS YOU SHALL...
ENOUGH.
THIS IS MY SON...
...WE WILL SPEAK. THE CEREMONY WILL CONTINUE.

SHORTLY...
HOW MANY MORE ARE TO DIE, FATHER?
IS NOT THE DEATH OF YOUR SON... MY BROTHER... ENOUGH? MUST MY WIFE TOO PAY THE PRICE OF ANCIENT FEUDS?
THE ELIXIR CAN SAVE HER. I WANT IT.
HENRI, DEAD?
NEVER!
YOU WILL HAVE NOTHING, REMY!
PIERRE...
...I WAS TALKIN' TO MY FATHER...
THE ELIXIR, FATHER...
...OR WOULD YOU HAVE ME TURN ASSASSIN RIGHT HERE?
IT CANNOT BE. EVEN IF WE HAD ALL THREE VIALS, I COULD NOT GIVE ANY TO AN OUTSIDER.
HAVE IT YOUR WAY, FATHER...
GAMBIT!
YOU DON'T WANT TO DO THIS, REMY. THIS ISN'T YOU.

OF COURSE IT'S NOT, CHERIE.
BUT THEN AGAIN...
...YOU DON'T KNOW ME AS WELL AS YOU THINK YOU DO!
NO ONE DOES!
FWAKOOM
FWAKOOM
FWAKOOM
YOU ALL WRAP YOURSELVES IN THE ANCIENT RITUALS, FATHER ... THE OLD WAYS.
LIVE BENEATH THE STREETS LIKE PAUPERS...
...WHILE YOU LET THE WEALTH SLIP THROUGH YOUR FINGERS.
YOU GIVE EVERYTHING AWAY IN EXCHANGE FOR LONG LIFE.
THAT IS NOT LIVING.
MY BROTHER IS DEAD. MY WIFE WILL BE SAVED.
IF MY FAMILY WILL NOT HELP ME WITH THIS...
...THEN I WILL DO IT MYSELF.
MOURN THE LOSS OF TWO SONS, JEAN-LUC LEBEAU.
WE NEED ALL THREE VIALS FOR THE ELIXIR TO BE COMPLETE. REMY CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO BETRAY US.
I KNOW.

SHROUDED IN MIST, THE TITHE COLLECTOR CONTINUES HIS JOURNEY THROUGH THE BACK STREETS OF THE FRENCH QUARTER.
WRAPPED IN A CLOAK OF FEAR, THE STREETS EMPTY BEFORE HIM.
FEW WOULD CONFRONT THE TITHE COLLECTOR ON HIS MIDNIGHT MEANDERINGS.
FEW...
...BUT NOT **ALL**.
WHAT? ASSASSIN, YOU *DARE*?
YEAH, WE *DARE*, OLD MAN!
DARE TO BE TAKIN' WHAT IS OURS BY RIGHT OF BIRTH AND THE SWEAT OF OUR BROW!
YOU WILL NEVER HAVE--
WE'LL BE HAVIN' IT *ALL*, TITHE COLLECTOR!
YOU BEEN GIVIN' US THE POWER TO DO THE TAKIN' FOR A LOT OF YEARS NOW.
SO *NOW* WE DO WHAT WE BE TRAINED TO DO...
KILL...
...AND *TAKE*!
WHY..? THE PACT--?!
...ANCIENT HISTORY!

FOR ***BOTH*** GUILDS, JULIEN.
UNITED WE HAVE ENOUGH POWER AND SKILLS TO TAKE WHATEVER WE WANT...
...FROM WHOEVER WE WANT.
DAT RIGHT, PIERRE. EVEN TAKE FROM THE TITHE COLLECTOR AND THE BENEFACTRESS HERSELF.
BOLD WORDS.
WORDS YOU, AND THE DESCENDANTS OF BOTH GUILDS, WILL SOON COME TO REGRET.
THE PACT IS ENDED.
SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES.
STOP HIM! THE ***VIAL!*** HE'S...
...GONE. THE OTHER TWO ARE USELESS WITHOUT...
DON'T WORRY, T'IEF! YOU BE STEALIN' THE PART OF THE ELIXIR YOUR GUILD HAS. THAT'S WHY I PAID YOU FOR IT!
I GOT THE SECOND RIGHT HERE. NOW I'LL JUST BE TRACKIN' HIM BACK TO PARIS TO GET THE LAST.
WITH ALL THREE VIALS, THE LONG LIFE CAN BE MINE TO GIVE TO THE ASSASSINS. WE ***WILL*** BE HAVIN' THE POWERS ***AND*** THE LONG LIFE!
THE GARDEN DISTRICT...
I GREW UP ON THE STREETS.
DON'T REMEMBER MY ***REAL*** PARENTS.
TOOK TO STEALIN' TO SURVIVE.


THAT'S HOW I MET **JEAN-LUC.** TRIED TO STEAL HIS WALLET.
DIDN'T KNOW HE WAS THE HEAD OF THE LEGENDARY THIEVES GUILD.
HE TOOK A SHINE TO ME... TOOK ME IN AS ONE OF HIS OWN. TAUGHT ME WHAT I KNOW.
HENRI WAS LIKE A BROTHER TO ME.
THEY BE THE ONLY FAMILY I GOT.
AND NOW...
YOU STILL GOT *US*, GAMBIT... THE X-MEN.
THAT I DO, CHERIE. THANK YOU.
LOOK, I KNOW THIS IS NOT EASY FOR YOU, BUT I *HAVE* TO DO THIS... YOU...
...**YOU** DON'T HAVE TO BE STANDIN' GUARD ON BELLA DONNA. I CAN FIND SOMEONE...
I'M DOING THIS FOR *YOU*, REMY, NOT FOR HER.
BOTH GUILDS MAY TRY AND COME AFTER HER. I'LL KEEP HER SAFE.
BEFORE YOU GO, TELL ME...
WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
I BOUGHT IT YEARS AGO. A PLACE TO RETIRE TO ONE DAY. SETTLE DOWN AND RAISE A FAMILY.
Pah! WHO AM I *KIDDING*? I'LL NEVER SETTLE DOWN.
BUT EVEN A THIEF HAS TO HAVE DREAMS, EH?
TAKE CARE, CHERIE!
YOU TOO, SUGAH.
YOU TOO.

...TO YOU AN' ME ALONE, GIRL.
SO, TELL ME, BELLA DONNA...
...ARE *YOU* THE DREAM OF A THIEF?
A SHORT TIME LATER...
YOU RETURN TO A WOUNDED MAN, REMY?
SORRY TO SEE THAT, MARIUS, BUT... I NEED YOUR HELP.
HAVE INFORMATION THAT CAN HELP ME SAVE *BELL*'S LIFE.
IT WILL MEAN BETRAYING YOUR GUILD... YOUR FAMILY.
I CAN LIVE WITH IT.
PARIS...
I HATE TO LEAVE YOU WHEN THINGS GO BADLY WITH YOUR BUSINESS, CANDRA...
...BUT I HAVE MY OWN AFFAIRS TO ATTEND.
DO NOT CONCERN YOURSELF WITH ME, *GIDEON*...
...EVERYTHING WILL BE RESOLVED AS PLANNED.
TO BE CONTINUED...

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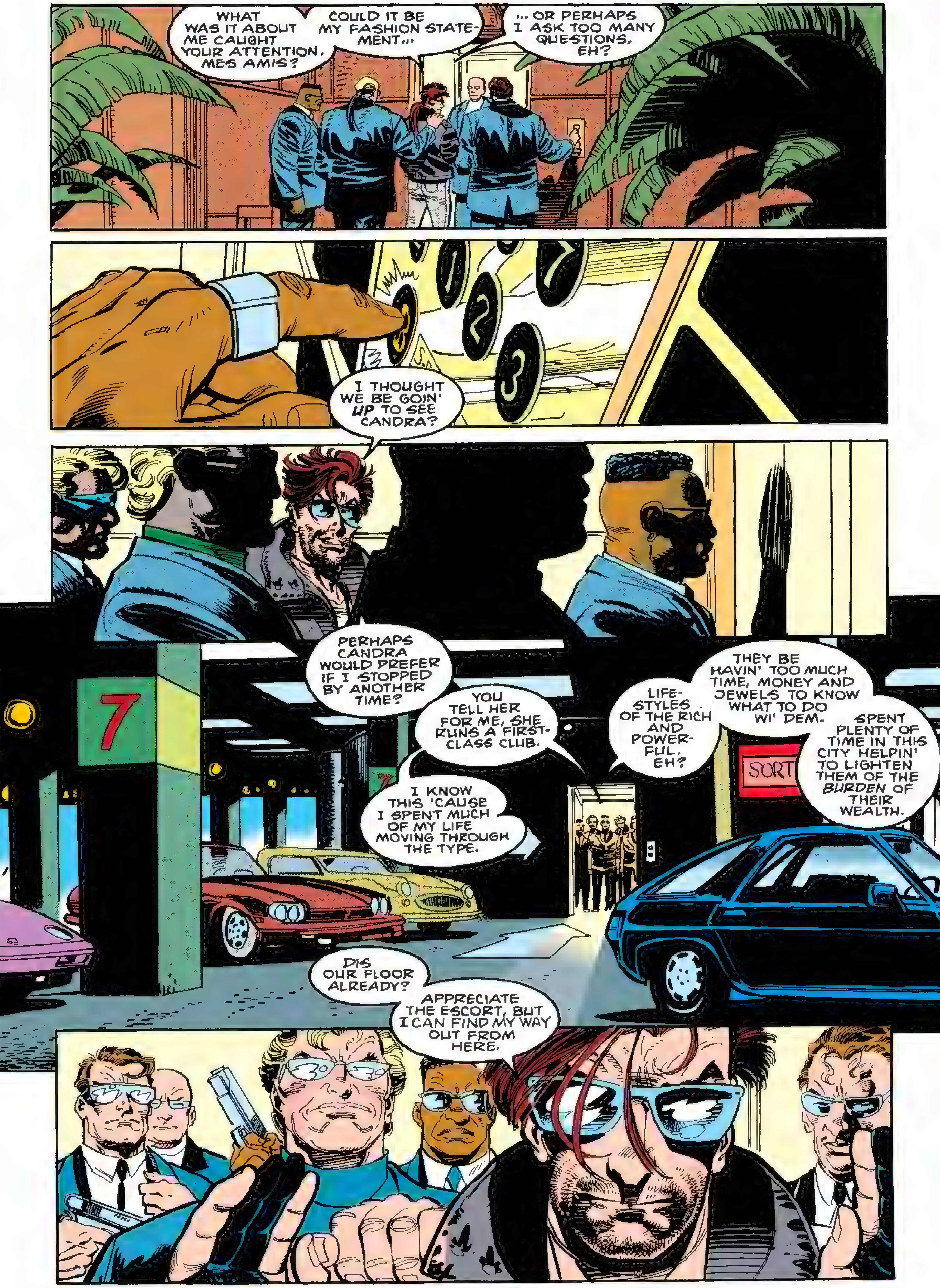
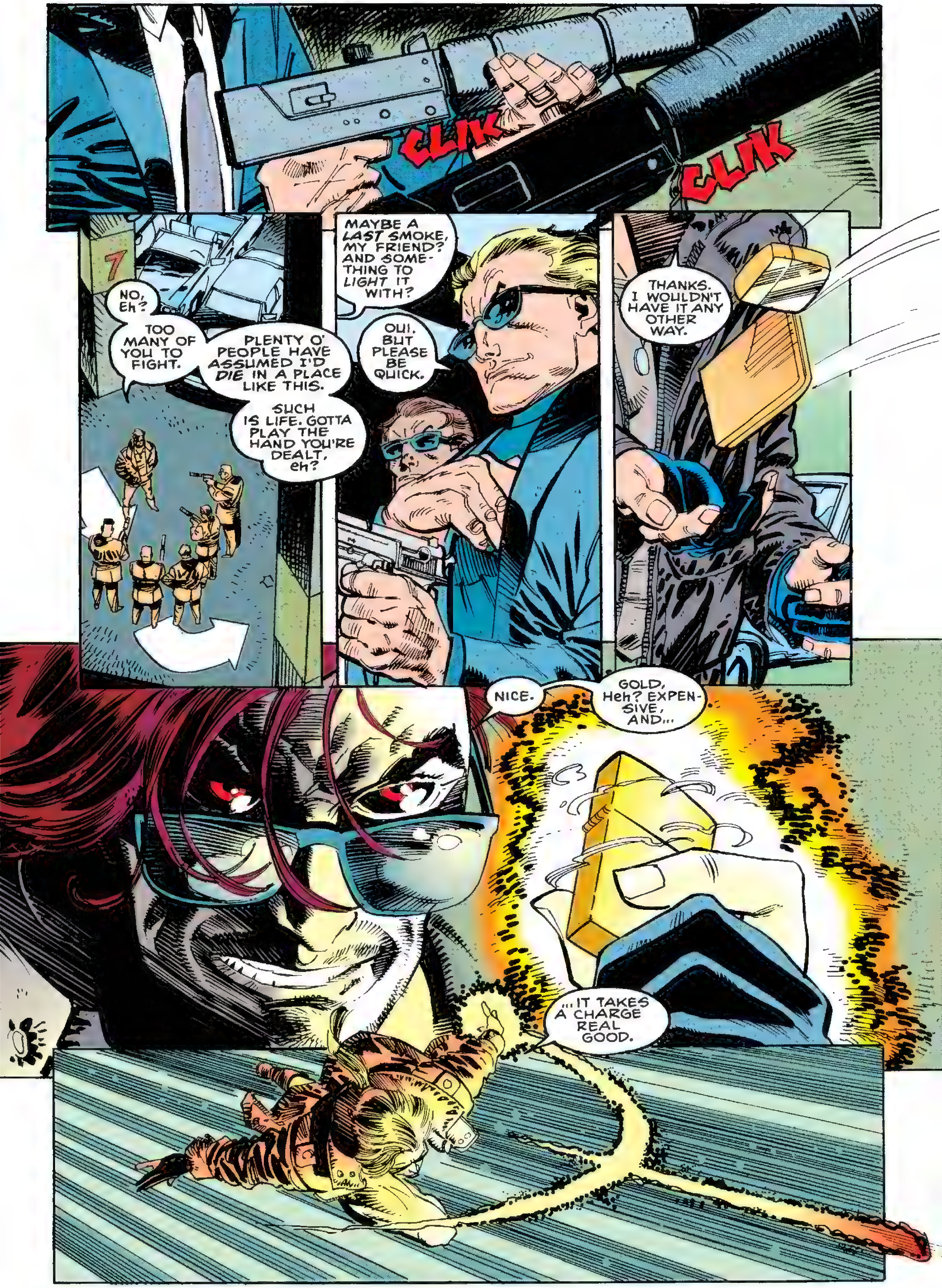
GAMBIT
L. WEEKS

STAN LEE PRESENTS
AN ADVENTURE OF THE CAJUN X MAN
the BENEFACTRESS
STORY/ART HOWARD MACKIE / LEE WEEKS / KLAUS JANSON
THE CLUB PETITE CHOU...
NO MORE EXCLUSIVE CLUB EXISTS IN PARIS...
... OR ANYWHERE ELSE ON EARTH.
THE WEALTHY AND POWERFUL HAVE AN OPEN INVITATION TO PARTAKE IN A VARIETY OF DIVERSIONS BEHIND THE CLOSED DOORS OF THE CLUB.
NOT EVERY ACTIVITY WOULD BE CONSIDERED RESPECTABLE, OR EVEN LEGAL, BUT...
... WHEN, AT ANY GIVEN TIME, THERE ARE AMBASSADORS PRESENT FROM FIVE DIFFERENT NATIONS...
... PARISIAN AUTHORITIES ARE MORE THAN HAPPY TO TURN A BLIND EYE.
WITHIN AN ESTABLISHMENT SUCH AS THIS, THE MUTANT THIEF KNOWN AS GAMBIT MOVES WITH TOTAL CONFIDENCE...
<WHERE CAN I FIND CANDRA, DEALER?>*
<MANY PARDONS, SIR, BUT I AM NOT ACQUAINTED WITH SUCH A PERSON... WOULD YOU CARE TO SIT IN ON THE NEXT HAND?>
NO.
GAMBIT CREATED BY CHRIS CLAREMONT & JIM LEE
* TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH. --B.H.
COLORIST STEVE BUCCELLATO LETTERER RICHARD STARKINGS EDITOR BOB HARRAS CHIEF TOM DeFALCO

I THOUGHT THAT GAMBLING WAS A *PASSION* AMONG YOU AMERICANS.
M'SWEET, I ***NEVER*** GAMBLE...
...I ***WIN.***
AT *EVERYTHING.*
ME, I'M A LOUISIANAN.
I FIND MY PASSION IN FAR MORE ***PLEASURABLE*** PURSUITS.
PERHAPS YOU'D CARE TO JOIN ME?
IT WOULD BE AN EXPERIENCE?
ONE NOT SOON FORGOTTEN.
MONSIEUR LEBEAU?
OUI?
THE MANAGER WOULD LIKE THE PLEASURE OF YOUR COMPANY, SIR.
LOVE TO OBLIGE, MON AMI, BUT AS YOU CAN SEE...
WE INSIST, SIR.
I BELIEVE THAT THIS IS THE APPOINTMENT I JOURNEYED TO PARIS FOR, MAM'SELLE.
IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME--


WHAT WAS IT ABOUT ME CAUGHT YOUR ATTENTION, MES AMIS?
COULD IT BE MY FASHION STATEMENT...
...OR PERHAPS I ASK TOO MANY QUESTIONS, EH?
1
2
3
I THOUGHT WE BE GOIN' *UP* TO SEE CANDRA?
PERHAPS CANDRA WOULD PREFER IF I STOPPED BY ANOTHER TIME?
YOU TELL HER FOR ME, SHE RUNS A FIRST-CLASS CLUB.
I KNOW THIS 'CAUSE I SPENT MUCH OF MY LIFE MOVING THROUGH THE TYPE.
LIFE-STYLES OF THE RICH AND POWERFUL, EH?
THEY BE HAVIN' TOO MUCH TIME, MONEY AND JEWELS TO KNOW WHAT TO DO WI' DEM.
SPENT PLENTY OF TIME IN THIS CITY HELPIN' TO LIGHTEN THEM OF THE *BURDEN* OF THEIR WEALTH.
7
SORT
DIS OUR FLOOR ALREADY?
APPRECIATE THE ESCORT, BUT I CAN FIND MY WAY OUT FROM HERE.


CLIK
CLIK
7
NO, Eh?
TOO MANY OF YOU TO FIGHT.
PLENTY O' PEOPLE HAVE ASSUMED I'D *DIE* IN A PLACE LIKE THIS.
SUCH IS LIFE. GOTTA PLAY THE HAND YOU'RE DEALT, eh?
MAYBE A *LAST* SMOKE, MY FRIEND? AND SOMETHING TO *LIGHT* IT WITH?
OUI. BUT PLEASE BE QUICK.
THANKS. I WOULDN'T HAVE IT ANY OTHER WAY.
NICE.
GOLD, Heh? EXPENSIVE, AND...
...IT TAKES A CHARGE REAL GOOD.

BA-KOOM
I'LL BE THANKIN' YOU FOR YOUR KINDNESS IN CONFIRMIN' THAT I HAD THE RIGHT PLACE.
THANKS TOO FOR THE SMOKE, BUT LOOK HERE...
...I ALREADY HAD ME A LIGHT.
TIME I GO VISITIN' THIS CANDRA. SHE HAS SOMETHIN' I WANT.
BUT FIRST-- TIME T'CHANGE INTO MY WORKIN' CLOTHES.

I'LL BE SLIPPIN' IN AND OUT OF THIS HERE PLACE 'FORE ANY ALARM HAS SOUNDED.
THIS IS WHAT I DO BEST...
...BEING A THIEF IN THE NIGHT.
USUALLY I BE GOIN' FOR THE CASH, JEWELS, OR MAYBE SOME OTHER VALUABLE TRASH.
BUT TONIGHT THE PRIZE I SEEK GOES WAY BEYOND MONETARY VALUE.
THE ELIXIR OF LIFE THIS HERE CANDRA HAS BEEN GIVIN' THE THIEVES GUILD ALL THESE YEARS.
THE THIEVES, MY FAMILY, WON'T HELP ME WITH GETTIN' SOME.
SO NOW, I COME TO THE SOURCE.
I DO THIS FOR YOU, BELLA DONNA. ONCE MY WIFE...
...BACK IN THE BIG EASY YOU BE ON THE BRINK OF DEATH.
I WON'T ALLOW THAT TO HAPPEN. NOT WHILE I CAN STEAL BACK A CHANCE FOR YOU TO LIVE.
ONCE A THIEF, ALWAYS A THIEF.
Heh? TITHE COLLECTOR?
YES, GAMBIT OF THE THIEVES' GUILD...
...CANDRA...
...WILL SEE YOU NOW.

AS GAMBIT SLIPS INTO A WARM, DEEP, DARKNESS, HIS FINAL THOUGHTS TURN BACK TOWARD NEW ORLEANS...
...TO HIS GARDEN DISTRICT HOME, WHERE HIS FELLOW X-MAN, ROGUE, AWAITS HIS RETURN...
... AND FEARS, IN SPITE OF HERSELF, WHAT THAT RETURN WILL BRING.
I 'MEMBER WHEN HE FIRST BE SPARKIN' THIS LITTLE FLOWER HERE. HE COME TO ME AND SAY, "TANTE MATTIE, YOU BE HAVIN' A LOVE POTION I CAN USE?"
I TELL HIM, "BOY, I'M A HEALER, NOW YOU GO WIN BELLA DONNA OVER PROPER LIKE!"
Y'ALL A DOCTOR, THEN?
THAT REMY WAS ALWAYS A SCAMP AND A HEART STEALER, BUT HE GOT A HEART OF GOLD HIMSELF!
I'M A HEALER, GIRL! MUCH BETTER THAN ANYONE TRAINED IN THEM FANCY MEDICAL SCHOOLS.
I'VE GOT THE EYE AND THE TOUCH, ROGUE!
AND IT DON'T BE TAKIN' NO SPECIAL POWERS TO SEE YOU LOVE REMY, DON'T YOU?
AND HERE YOU ARE, WATCHIN' OVER HIS WIFE.
YOU POOR THING.
REMEMBER, CHILD, THE GOOD LORD DON'T GIVE US A BIGGER BURDEN THAN WE CAN CARRY.

NOW YOU KEEP AN *EYE* ON HER. I'LL BE STOPPIN' IN EVERYDAY, GIRL.
BELLE'S DADDY BE TRYIN' *ALL SORTS* OF MAGIC TO KEEP HER ALIVE, BUT SHE SLIPPIN' AWAY.
I HOPE REMY CAN COME THROUGH. THERE'S ONLY SO MUCH HEALIN' I CAN DO.
YOU CALL ME NOW, IF ANYTHIN' CHANGES.
I'LL BE HERE, TANTE.
JUST YOU AND ME AGAIN, BELLE.
YOU DREAMIN' OF REMY AND ALL THE TIMES YOU HAD TOGETHER.
IT'D BE *REAL* EASY FOR ME TO ABSORB THOSE MEMORIES WITH MY MUTANT POWERS. JUST ONE LITTLE OL' TOUCH AND...
... LIKE I SAID, IT'D BE *REAL* EASY.
PARIS.
I'M ALONE.
CAN'T BE BELLY-ACHIN' ABOUT HOW CANDRA TREATS HER CAPTIVES.
I COULD GET USED TO THIS.
VERY *USED TO THIS.*

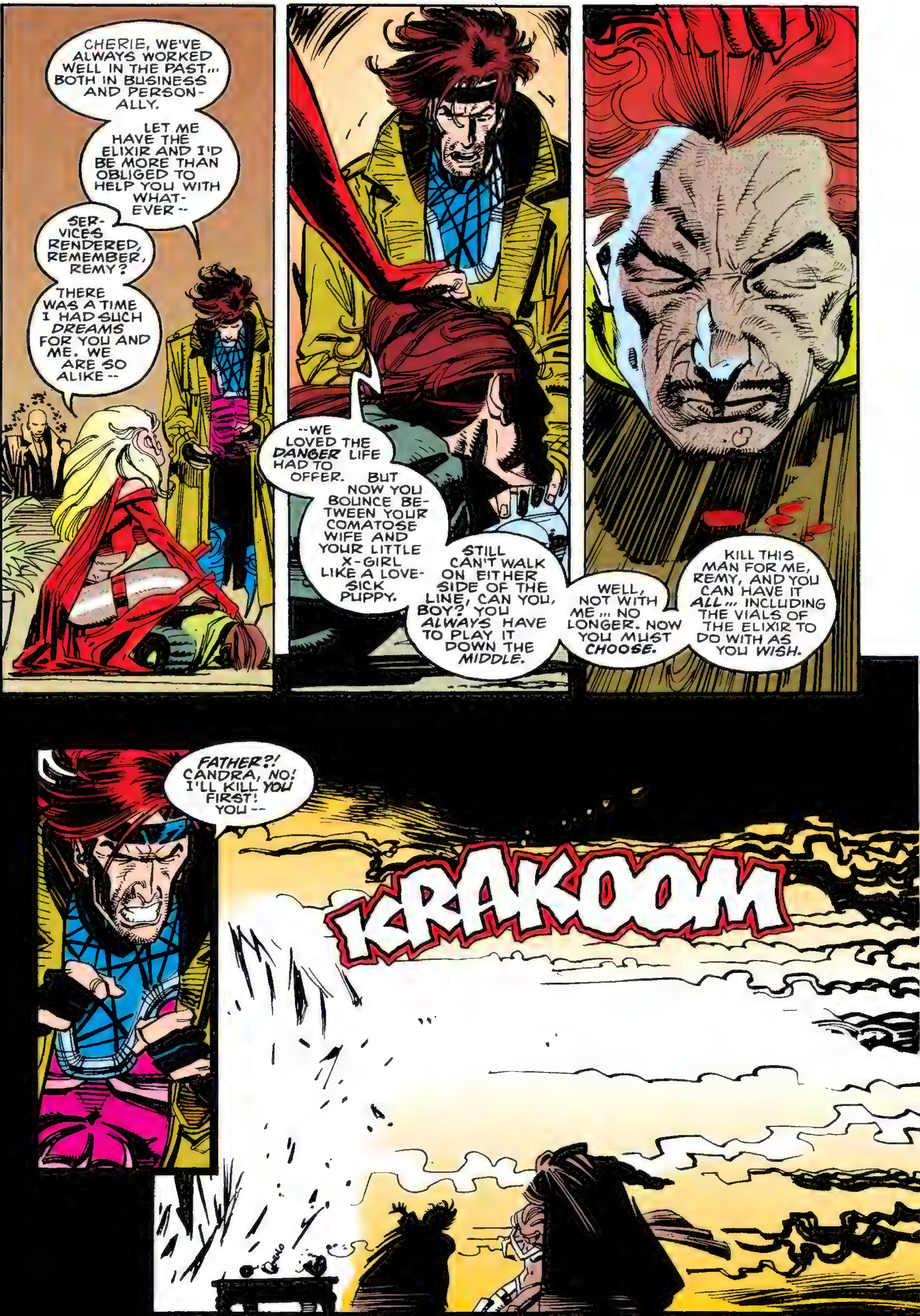
BUT I'VE GOT WORK TO BE DOIN'...
...AND AS LONG AS THEY WERE NICE ENOUGH TO LEAVE ME ALONE...
...I'LL BE DOIN' IT.
NO, THIEF...
...DO NOT GET UP SO CAVALIERLY!
I SUFFERED A GREAT INDIGNITY AT THE HANDS OF YOUR KIND IN NEW ORLEANS LAST NIGHT. TIME FOR YOU TO SETTLE THE DEBT OF YOUR GUILD.
DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU BE TALKIN' ABOUT, MON AMI.
AN' DON'T REALLY CARE.
WITH SHOCKING SPEED, GAMBIT UTILIZES HIS MUTANT POWER TO TAP INTO THE POTENTIAL ENERGY OF AN OBJECT AND TRANSMUTE IT INTO INTER-KINETIC ENERGY.
THE EFFECT ON THE CHARGED-UP PICTURE FRAME IS...
...AS USUAL...
FWAKOOOM
...DRAMATIC!

IF YOU WANT TO CONTINUE THIS LITTLE DANCE, WE GONNA DO IT ON EVEN TERMS, MONSIEUR COLLECTOR...
... AND AFTER I KICK YOUR TAIL, YOU'LL BE TAKIN' ME TO THE ELIXIR.
NO, MUTANT. IT'S TIME YOU LEARN THE LESSONS OF YOUR ANCESTORS!
LEARN OF THE PAIN RECEIVED AT THE HANDS OF THE TITHE COLLECTOR!
ENOUGH!
WHA--!
YOU KNOW I HAVE NEED OF THIS CREATURE ALIVE...
... FOR NOW.
NO.
YOU?!
YOU'RE CANDRA-- THE BENEFACTRESS ?!?!
IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE YOU LEFT PARIS, REMY...
BACK THEN, NEITHER OF US EVER REALLY HAD MUCH USE FOR NAMES, DID WE?
NO, INDEED, CHERIE! NAMES WERE THE LAST THING WE EXCHANGED.
IT WAS A TIME.
TOO TRUE...

"... MA CHERE."
NEW ORLEANS...
HER HANDS ARE CAPABLE OF CRUSHING MARBLE, BENDING FORGED STEEL.
WHY THEN DOES SHE TREMBLE AT THE VERY THOUGHT OF TOUCHING THE PORCELAIN-LIKE SKIN OF THE SLEEPING WOMAN..?
COMING CLOSER, SHE TURNS COLD WITH FEAR.
FOR SHE KNOWS -- IN HER HEART AND IN HER SOUL -- THAT WHAT SHE WANTS, SHE HAS NO RIGHT TO HAVE.
NO!
LORD, WHAT WAS I THINKING?
HOW SELFISH COULD I BE?! TO EVEN THINK OF ABSORBING HER MEMORIES..!
IN HER CONDITION, THERE'S NO TELLIN' WHAT IT'D DO TO HER!
BUT ROGUE'S WORDS ARE SUDDENLY CUT OFF AS BELLA DONNA REACHES OUT IN AN INVOLUNTARY REFLEX.
I'M SORRY, BELLE. I'LL NEVER--
THE FLESH TO FLESH CONTACT ROGUE CHOSE TO AVOID IS MADE.
MEMORIES THAT ARE NOT HER OWN RUSH FORWARD TO ENGULF HER MIND.
WITHIN A MOMENT SHE IS...
... WILLINGLY...
...LOST.

PARIS...
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE *LEFT*, REMY...
...AND YOU CERTAINLY *NEVER* SHOULD HAVE RETURNED!
WOMP
AH, CHERIE, YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED A BIT. SO QUICK TO USE YOUR TELEKINETIC POWERS!
STILL AS *FIERY* AS WHEN I LEFT...
...AND EVEN *MORE* BEAUTIFUL.
DO NOT TRY YOUR CAJUN CHARM, MUTANT! IT DOES *NOTHING* FOR ME...
MAYBE NOT, BUT...
...AH, BUT THERE *WAS* A TIME...
THAT TIME IS *LONG PAST*, THIEF!
YOU NEVER WERE VERY GOOD AT *COMMITMENTS*, WERE YOU? NO LOYALTY TO ANYONE BUT YOURSELF.
I FINISHED MY WORK FOR YOU "*CHERIE!*"
AND NOW YOU'VE COME BACK TO PARIS... SEEKING TO *BETRAY* YOUR GUILD... FOR *THIS!*
THE *ELIXIR!* CANDRA, GIVE--!

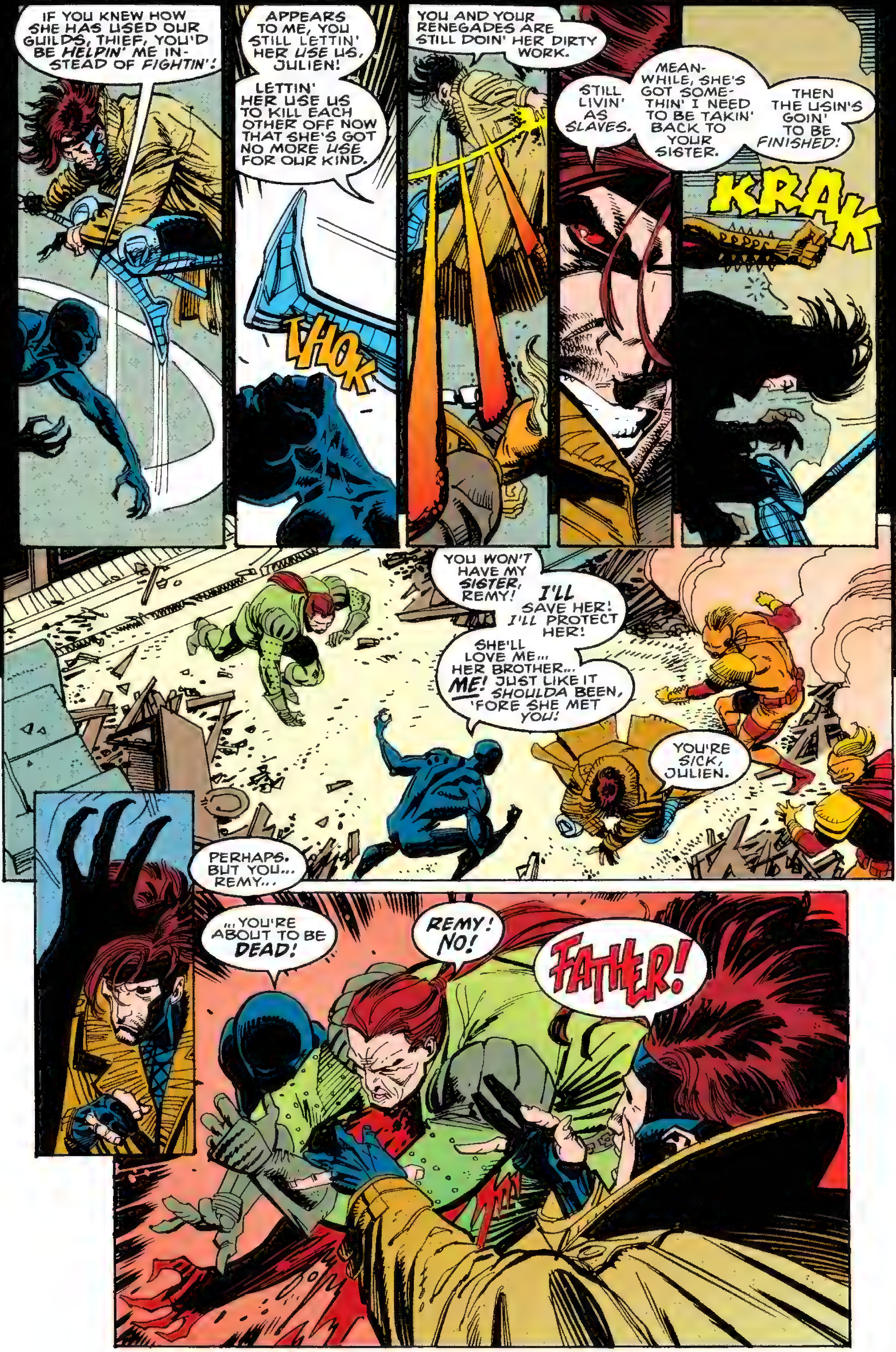
NOT SO FAST, MY *HANDSOME* ONE.
PERHAPS IN EXCHANGE FOR *SERVICES RENDERED*, AN ARRANGEMENT COULD BE MADE...
...ISN'T THAT THE WAY THE THIEVES GUILD PREFERS TO DO BUSINESS?
PLEASE LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT *MY* GUILDS.
OH, YES, REMY, *MY* GUILDS.
I SET THEM UP CENTURIES AGO. I GAVE THEM THE ELIXIR AND THE POWERS.
THIEVES AND ASSASSINS ALWAYS AT MY SERVICE...
...AS I REAPED THE BENEFITS OF BOTH. USING EACH TO KEEP THE OTHER IN CHECK IN A NEVER-ENDING RIVALRY.
BUT IT IS AN *OLD* SYSTEM, MY LOVE. ONE CONCEIVED IN AN EARLIER ERA, WHEN I WAS MUCH YOUNGER.
SNAP
IT IS TIME TO *SHAKE UP* THINGS. I HAVE NEED FOR A *NEW* ORGANIZATION TO HELP ME TOWARD FUTURE ASPIRATIONS.
OUT WITH THE OLD AND IN WITH THE NEW, I ALWAYS SAY.


CHERIE, WE'VE ALWAYS WORKED WELL IN THE PAST... BOTH IN BUSINESS AND PERSONALLY.
LET ME HAVE THE ELIXIR AND I'D BE MORE THAN OBLIGED TO HELP YOU WITH WHATEVER --
SERVICES RENDERED, REMEMBER, REMY?
THERE WAS A TIME I HAD SUCH *DREAMS* FOR YOU AND ME. WE ARE SO ALIKE --
--WE LOVED THE *DANGER* LIFE HAD TO OFFER. BUT NOW YOU BOUNCE BETWEEN YOUR COMATOSE WIFE AND YOUR LITTLE X-GIRL LIKE A LOVE-SICK PUPPY.
STILL CAN'T WALK ON EITHER SIDE OF THE LINE, CAN YOU, BOY? YOU *ALWAYS* HAVE TO PLAY IT DOWN THE *MIDDLE*.
WELL, NOT WITH ME... NO LONGER. NOW YOU MUST *CHOOSE.*
KILL THIS MAN FOR ME, REMY, AND YOU CAN HAVE IT *ALL*... INCLUDING THE VIALS OF THE ELIXIR TO DO WITH AS YOU *WISH.*
FATHER?! CANDRA, *NO!* I'LL KILL *YOU* FIRST! YOU --
KRAKOOM

NEW ORLEANS.
ROGUE FEELS ANOTHER'S DREAMS... ANOTHER'S PAST.
THROUGH THE FLOOD OF BELLA DONNA'S MEMORIES, SHE EXPERIENCES THE PRIVILEGED LIFE OF ONE BORN AND RAISED TO THE ASSASSIN GUILD ELITE.
MEMORIES OF A YOUNG GIRL IN LOVE...
...IN LOVE WITH A YOUNG REMY LEBEAU...
...GAMBIT.
ROGUE GRASPS AT THESE MEMORIES, TRYING TO MAKE THEM HER OWN.
HOW YOUNG AND TENDER HE SEEMS AS HE HOLDS THE WOMAN HE LOVES IN A STRONG EMBRACE.
HIS GENTLE LAUGH ECHOES ACROSS HER MIND.
THE BURNING LOOK IN HIS EYES JUST PRIOR TO THE TOUCHING OF LIPS, LINGERS ON.
THE SOFT CARESS OF HIS FLESH SETS HER OWN AFIRE.
A LIFETIME SHARED IN THE BRIEFEST OF SECONDS.
ANOTHER'S LIFETIME OF MEMORIES.
MEMORIES ROGUE IS LOATHE TO LET PASS AWAY.
PAINFUL MEMORIES OF WHAT ONCE WAS...
...AND WHICH CAN NEVER BE HERS.
GAMBIT...
...OH LORD...
...WHAT HAVE AH DONE?

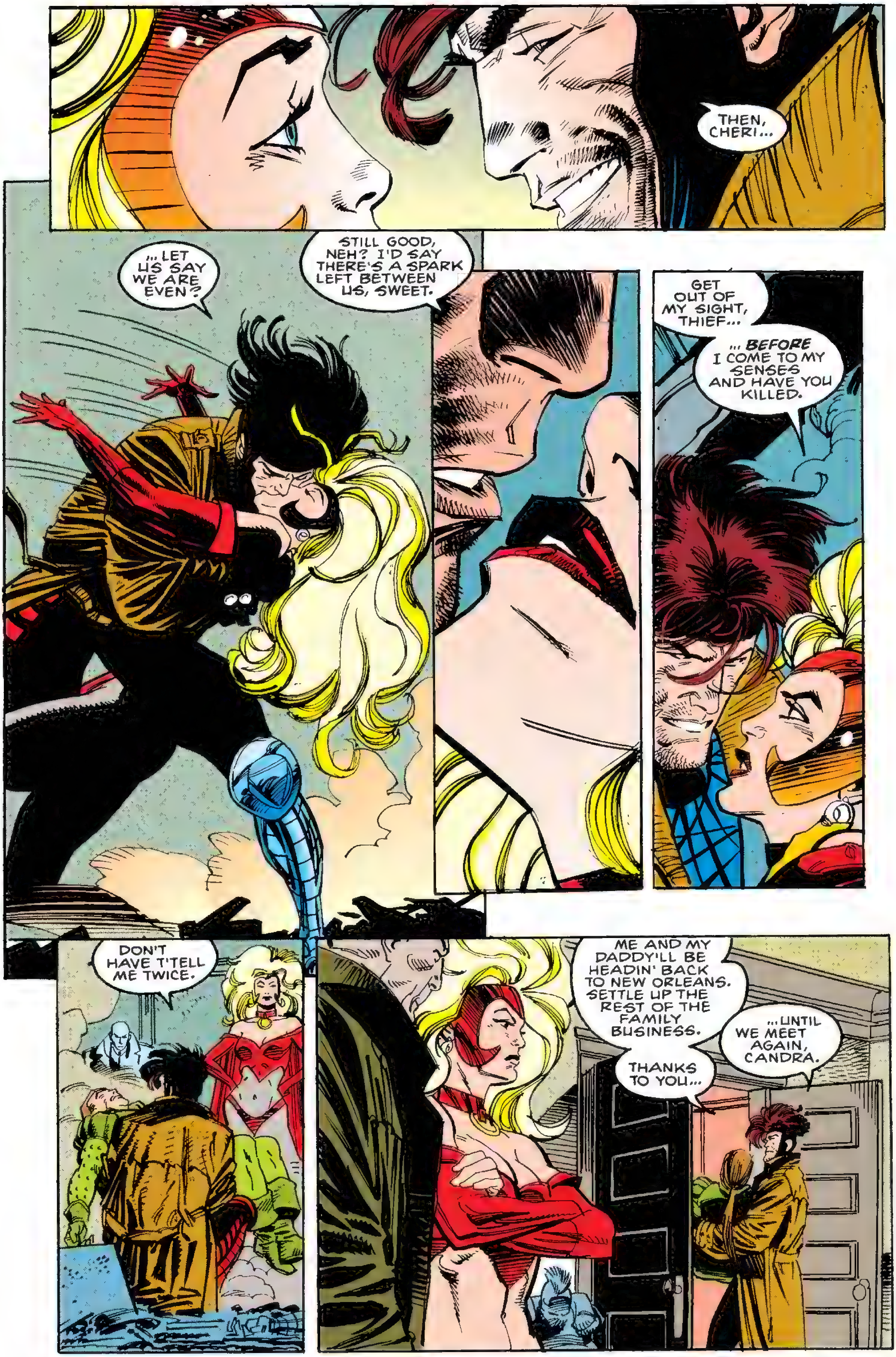
"WHAT IN THE NAME O' HEAVEN HAVE AH DONE?"
WHAT A PRETTY PICTURE WE GOT HERE, NEH?
I SEE GAMBIT BEAT ME TO YOU, BUT...
... HE WON'T BE WINNING THE DAY!
I WANT WHAT IS MINE, WITCH! YOU GAVE ME A TASTE OF THE ELIXIR AN' BROUGHT ME BACK FROM THE BRINK O' DEATH.
FOR DIS I STIRRED UP ALL KINDS OF TROUBLE FOR YOU. NOW YOU BE HOLDIN' OUT ON ME. GIVE ME THE ELIXIR!
I THINK *NOT*, JULIEN. I OWE YOU NOTHING.
TITHE COLLECTOR. DESTROY THIS RABBLE!
YOU LOOKIN' TO MAKE ME *LAUGH*, CANDRA?
YOUR WHIPPIN' BOY COULDN'T HOLD HIS OWN AGAINST US IN NEW ORLEANS. WHAT MAKES YOU THINK HE CAN PROTECT YOU NOW, HEH?
UNDER CANDRA'S ORDERS I ALLOWED YOU TO WIN THAT SMALL SKIRMISH IN YOUR BACKWATER CITY, ASSASSIN.
NOW, MY ORDERS ARE QUITE DIFFERENT.
WELL, YOU MIGHT BE SEEIN'...

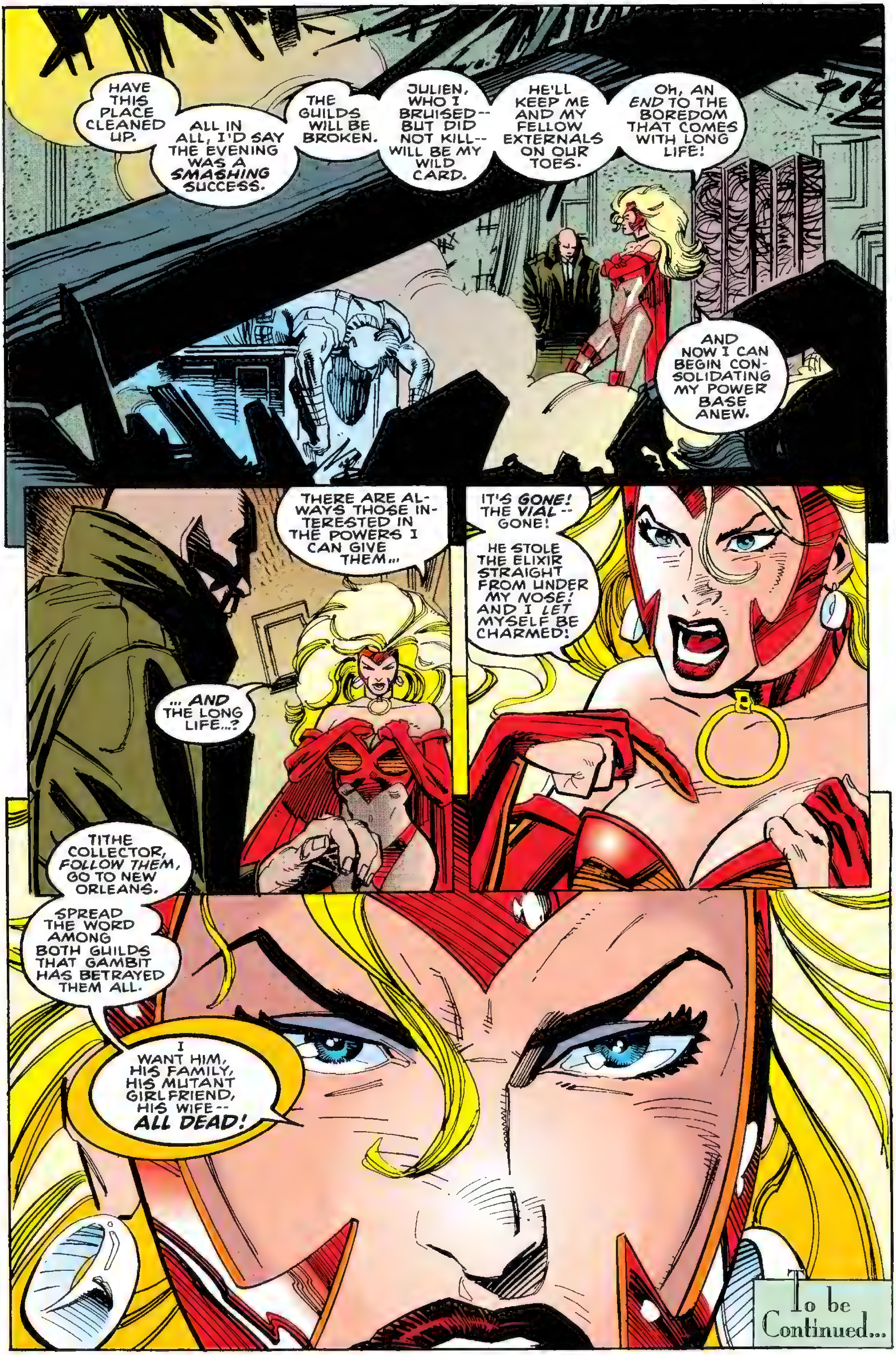
I *STILL* AIN'T TOO IMPRESSED.
KILL HIM. USE THE POWER THE WITCH GAVE US TO TEAR HIS HEART OUT!
BUT YOU, *BENEFACTRESS*...
...YOU ARE *MINE!*
HARD TO USE THEM POWERS OF YOURS WHEN THE LIFE IS BEIN' SQUEEZED OUT OF YOU, AIN'T IT?
YOU NEVER SHOULD BE MAKIN' PROMISES TO ME THAT YOU HAD NO INTENTION OF KEEPING.
I'LL COME AFTER YOU AND *ALL* YOUR KIND... THE *EXTERNALS*... I'LL KILL YOU ALL FOR WHAT YOU'VE TURNED ME INTO.
THWOK
THAT'S NO WAY TO BE TREATIN' A LADY, JULIEN.
BUT I REMEMBER NOW -- MANNERS WERE NEVER YOUR STRONG SUIT.


IF YOU KNEW HOW SHE HAS USED OUR GUILDS, THIEF, YOU'D BE *HELPIN'* ME INSTEAD OF *FIGHTIN'*!
APPEARS TO ME, YOU STILL LETTIN' HER *USE* US, JULIEN!
LETTIN' HER USE US TO KILL EACH OTHER OFF NOW THAT SHE'S GOT NO MORE *USE* FOR OUR KIND.
THOK
YOU AND YOUR RENEGADES ARE STILL DOIN' HER DIRTY WORK.
STILL LIVIN' AS *SLAVES.*
MEANWHILE, SHE'S GOT SOMETHIN' I NEED TO BE TAKIN' BACK TO YOUR SISTER.
THEN THE USIN'S GOIN' TO BE *FINISHED!*
KRAK
YOU WON'T HAVE MY *SISTER,* REMY! *I'LL* SAVE HER! *I'LL* PROTECT HER!
SHE'LL LOVE ME... HER BROTHER... ***ME!*** JUST LIKE IT *SHOULDA* BEEN, 'FORE SHE MET *YOU!*
YOU'RE *SICK,* JULIEN.
PERHAPS. BUT YOU... REMY...
...YOU'RE ABOUT TO BE ***DEAD!***
REMY! NO!
FATHER!

FATHER..!
NICE T'HEAR YOU *STILL* CALL ME THAT, SON.
DO WHAT YOU MUST DO TO SAVE YOUR WIFE...
I WILL, FATHER. BELLA DONNA AND YOU WILL *BOTH* LIVE!
IT'S *OVER*, JULIEN!
YOU GOT A HABIT OF TAKIN' AWAY TOO MANY IMPORTANT THINGS FROM ME.
YOU CHALLENGED ME TO THE DUEL THAT BROKE THE PEACE...
...AN' BECAUSE O'THAT, I HAD TO LEAVE NEW ORLEANS, MY FAMILY... BELLE!
I *WON'T* BE LETTIN' YOU GET AWAY WITH THIS STUFF NO MORE, BOY!
YOU *SAY* YOU WANT TO *HELP* BELLE, BUT ALL YOU'VE EVER BEEN INTERESTED IN...
IS *YOURSELF!*

BACK TO THE BEGINNIN'...
...IT ALL COMES DOWN TO JUST YOU AN' ME, DON'T IT?
I WOULDN'T HAVE IT ANY OTHER WAY, THIEF!
YOU WON'T BE WALKIN' OUT OF HERE, JULIEN.
NO. HE WON'T.
WHAT--?
A SILENT BOLT OF PSIONIC ENERGY SLAMS INTO JULIEN'S BODY.
HE CRASHES THROUGH THE WINDOW AND OUT INTO THE DARKNESS OF THE PARISIAN NIGHT.
SKRASH
THE BATTLE IS OVER.
NICE, CANDRA. BUT TELL ME, WOMAN -- WHY?!
YOU COULD HAVE SAVED YOURSELF A LOT OF TROUBLE BY LETTIN' US KILL EACH OTHER.
WHAT? AND STAIN MY PERSIAN CARPET? NEVER!
BESIDES, I WOULDN'T HAVE YOU DYING WHILE I OWED YOU MY LIFE, REMY.


THEN, CHERI...
...LET US SAY WE ARE EVEN?
STILL GOOD, NEH? I'D SAY THERE'S A SPARK LEFT BETWEEN US, SWEET.
GET OUT OF MY SIGHT, THIEF...
...*BEFORE* I COME TO MY SENSES AND HAVE YOU KILLED.
DON'T HAVE T'TELL ME TWICE.
ME AND MY DADDY'LL BE HEADIN' BACK TO NEW ORLEANS. SETTLE UP THE REST OF THE FAMILY BUSINESS.
THANKS TO YOU...
...UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN, CANDRA.


HAVE THIS PLACE CLEANED UP.
ALL IN ALL, I'D SAY THE EVENING WAS A *SMASHING* SUCCESS.
THE GUILDS WILL BE BROKEN.
JULIEN, WHO I BRUISED-- BUT DID NOT KILL-- WILL BE MY WILD CARD.
HE'LL KEEP ME AND MY FELLOW EXTERNALS ON OUR TOES.
Oh, AN *END* TO THE BOREDOM THAT COMES WITH LONG LIFE!
AND NOW I CAN BEGIN CONSOLIDATING MY POWER BASE ANEW.
THERE ARE ALWAYS THOSE INTERESTED IN THE POWERS I CAN GIVE THEM...
... *AND* THE LONG LIFE...?
IT'S *GONE!* THE *VIAL* -- GONE!
HE STOLE THE ELIXIR STRAIGHT FROM UNDER MY *NOSE!* AND I *LET* MYSELF BE CHARMED!
TITHE COLLECTOR, *FOLLOW THEM,* GO TO NEW ORLEANS.
SPREAD THE WORD AMONG BOTH GUILDS THAT GAMBIT HAS BETRAYED THEM ALL.
I WANT HIM, HIS FAMILY, HIS MUTANT GIRLFRIEND, HIS WIFE-- ***ALL DEAD!***
To be Continued...

MARVEL
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MAR
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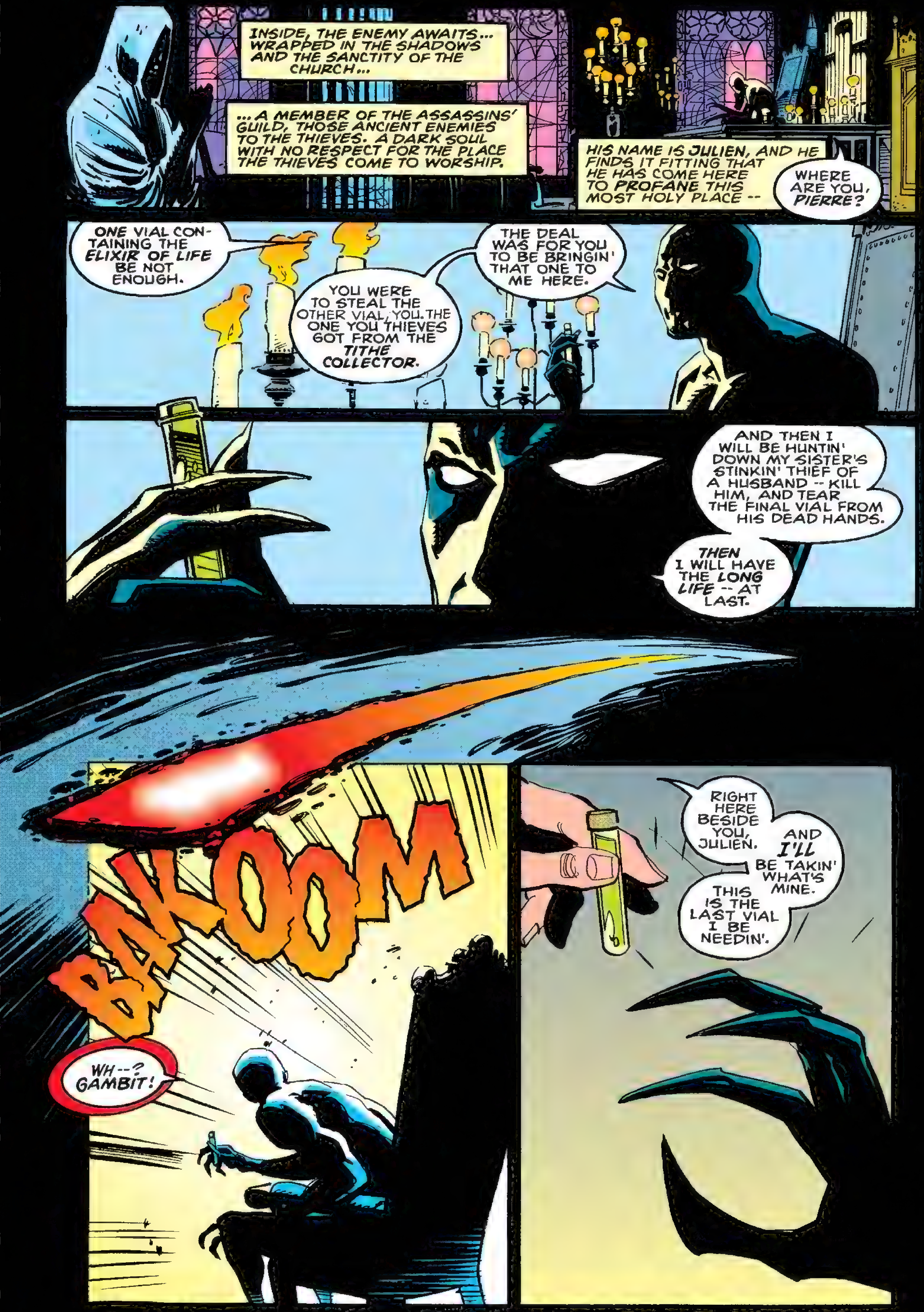
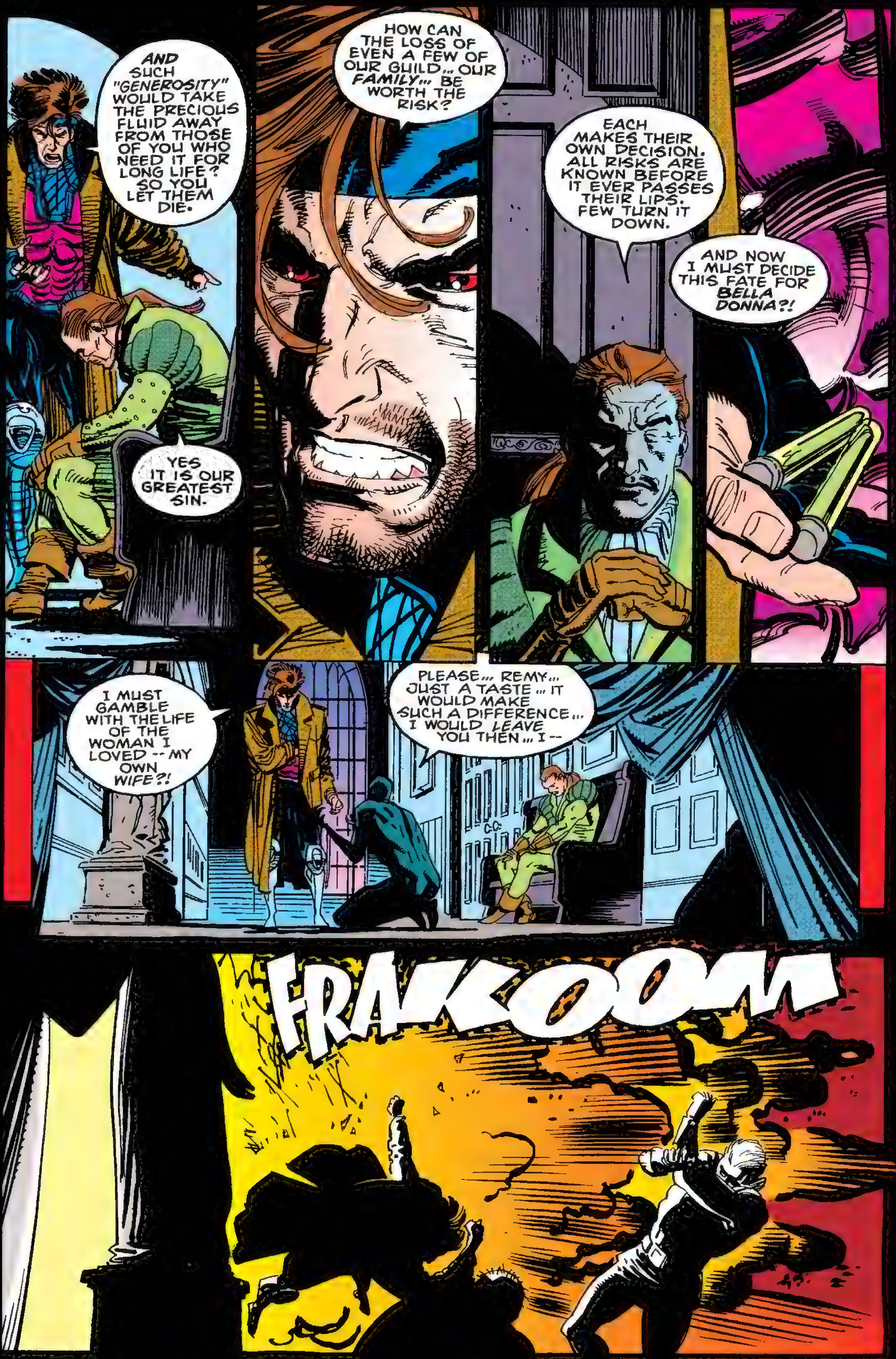
GAMBIT
TM

DEEP WITHIN THE FRENCH QUARTER OF NEW ORLEANS...
DRIFTING BACK TO A TIME WHEN HE -- AND NEW ORLEANS -- WERE A BIT YOUNGER.
A TIME OF VOTIVE CANDLES, PRAYERS TO THE SAINTS AND THE SMELL OF INCENSE FILLING THE AIR.
THE MAN CALLED GAMBIT FINDS HIMSELF LOST IN A DARK REVERIE.
A TIME WHEN THE THIEVES GATHERED IN THIS HOLY PLACE TO PRAY, TO CONFESS THEIR SINS... TO SEEK SOME PEACE IN AN OTHERWISE CONFUSING EXISTENCE.
A PEACE FOUND IN THIS PLACE... The CHURCH of The LOST THIEVES.
TOO MANY YEARS HAVE GONE BY SINCE THIS MUTANT THIEF LAST GENUFLECTED BEFORE THE ALTAR.
TOO MANY TRANSGRESSIONS.
TOO MUCH LIVING.
AND NOW HE RETURNS NOT TO PRAY NOR TO WORSHIP, BUT TO HUNT AN ENEMY.
BUT THE MOMENTARY FEAR HE HAS FOR HIS SOUL IS QUELLED BY THE KNOWLEDGE THAT HE MAY BE FORGIVEN THIS TRANSGRESSION.
HE COMES HERE, NOT OUT OF ANGER, BUT OF LOVE.
TO SAVE THE LIFE OF BELLA DONNA, HIS WIFE.
HOW CAN THIS ACTION BE VIEWED AS A SIN?
AND IF IT BE SO...
...THEN IT IS A SIN WITH WHICH GAMBIT IS WILLING TO LIVE.
STAN LEE PRESENTS
THIEF of TIME
GAMBIT CREATED BY CHRIS CLAREMONT & JIM LEE
AN ADVENTURE OF THE CAJUN X-MAN
STORY/ART HOWARD MACKIE / LEE WEEKS / KLAUS JANSON w/JASON GORDER ART ASSIST
COLORIST STEVE BUCCELLATO LETTERER RICHARD STARKINGS EDITOR BOB HARRAS CHIEF TOM DeFALCO

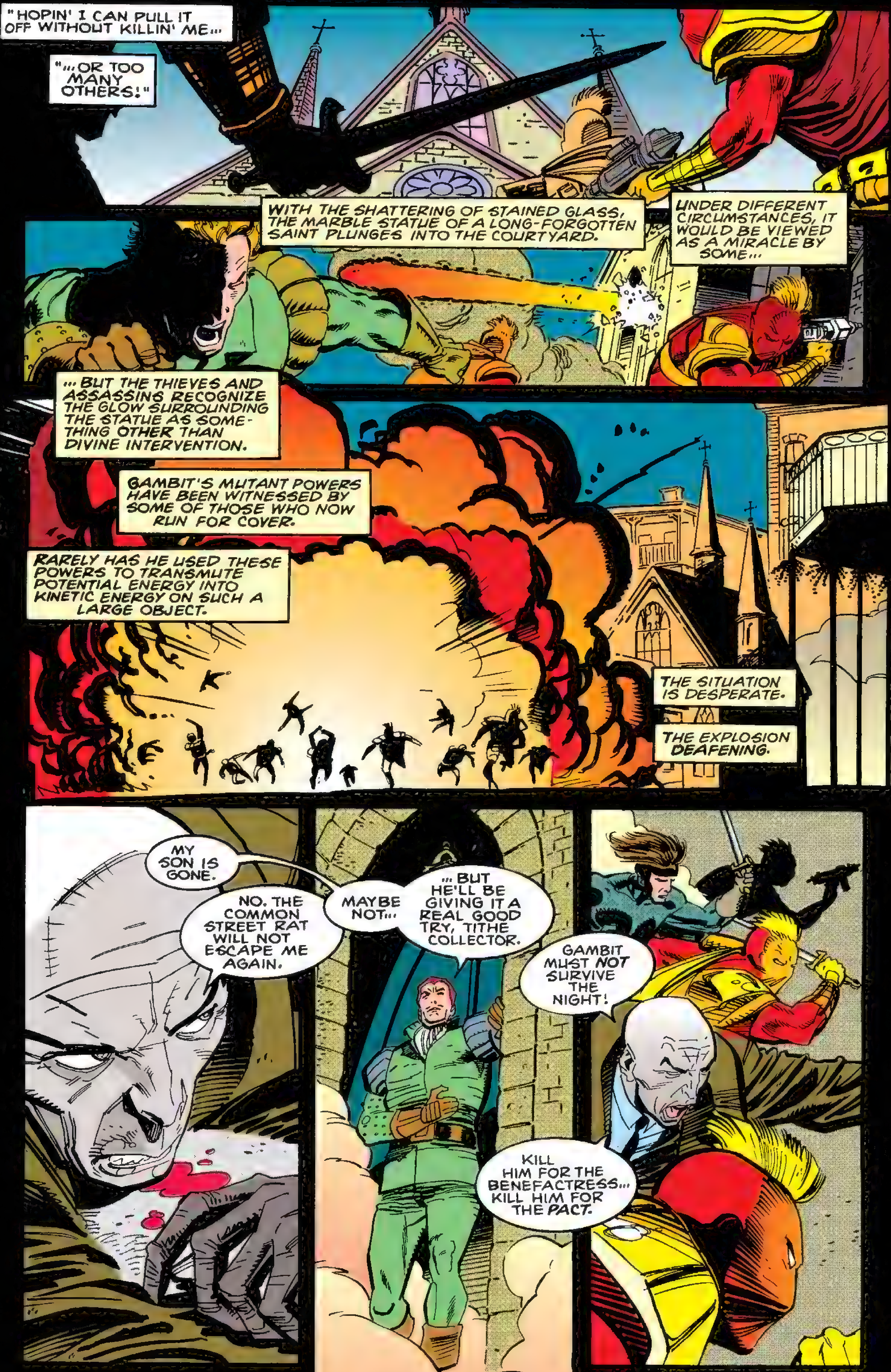

INSIDE, THE ENEMY AWAITS... WRAPPED IN THE SHADOWS AND THE SANCTITY OF THE CHURCH...
...A MEMBER OF THE ASSASSINS' GUILD, THOSE ANCIENT ENEMIES TO THE THIEVES. A DARK SOUL WITH NO RESPECT FOR THE PLACE THE THIEVES COME TO WORSHIP.
HIS NAME IS JULIEN, AND HE FINDS IT FITTING THAT HE HAS COME HERE TO PROFANE THIS MOST HOLY PLACE --
WHERE ARE YOU, PIERRE?
ONE VIAL CONTAINING THE ELIXIR OF LIFE BE NOT ENOUGH.
YOU WERE TO STEAL THE OTHER VIAL, YOU. THE ONE YOU THIEVES GOT FROM THE TITHE COLLECTOR.
THE DEAL WAS FOR YOU TO BE BRINGIN' THAT ONE TO ME HERE.
AND THEN I WILL BE HUNTIN' DOWN MY SISTER'S STINKIN' THIEF OF A HUSBAND -- KILL HIM, AND TEAR THE FINAL VIAL FROM HIS DEAD HANDS.
THEN I WILL HAVE THE LONG LIFE -- AT LAST.
BAKOOM
WH--? GAMBIT!
RIGHT HERE BESIDE YOU, JULIEN.
AND I'LL BE TAKIN' WHAT'S MINE.
THIS IS THE LAST VIAL I BE NEEDIN'.

YOUR LI'L FRIEND, PIERRE, SENDS HIS REGRETS, JULIEN. HE WON'T BE COMIN' TONIGHT. I CAUGHT HIM AS HE WAS TRYIN' TO STEAL THE ELIXIR FROM OUR OWN PEOPLE.
BELIEVE ME, THEY DIDN'T LIKE IT NONE TOO MUCH WHEN THEY LEARNED HE BETRAYED OUR PEOPLE TO YOU.
NO! IT CAN'T BE! I WON'T --
HEY -- I'M NOT GIVIN' YOU MUCH CHOICE HERE!
NO... PLEASE... I MUST HAVE A *TASTE* OF THE ELIXIR... JUST A TASTE... DON'T YOU SEE, I'LL *DIE* WITHOUT IT!
UNFORTUNATELY FOR US ALL... YOU'LL CONTINUE TO *LIVE*, JULIEN. THE ELIXIR IS FOR ***BELLA DONNA***... YOUR SISTER.
NO! I ***WON'T*** LIVE! I'M IN PAIN! LOOK AT ME! THIS IS WHAT THE ELIXIR HAS DONE TO ME!
WITHOUT IT, I WON'T LIVE ANOTHER DAY!
NO--! JULIEN, I -- I DIDN'T KNOW.
DIDN'T YOU, THIEF? THIS IS WHAT THE PRECIOUS ELIXIR CAN BRING TO YOU ALL.

JEAN-LUC LEBEAU, HEAD OF THE COUNCIL OF THIEVES STANDS GUARD AT THE FRONT OF THE CHURCH HE HAS VISITED SO MANY TIMES IN HIS LONG LIFE.
BUT THEN, JEAN-LUC REASONS, THERE HAVE BEEN MANY WONDROUS THINGS IN HIS LIFE SINCE HE FOUND THE LOST BOY WANDERING THE STREETS SO LONG AGO, THE BOY NOW CALLED --
GAMBIT.
FINGERS MOVE TO THE STILL-TENDER WOUND RECEIVED IN PARIS DURING A CONFRONTATION WITH CANDRA... BENEFACTRESS TO BOTH THIEVES AND ASSASSINS... AND PROVIDER OF THE NEAR LEGENDARY ELIXIR OF LIFE.
HIS LIFE WAS SAVED BY HIS ADOPTED SON, REMY -- WHO DARED CONFRONT CANDRA AND ESCAPE PARIS WITH ONE OF THE PRECIOUS VIALS OF ELIXIR.
FATHER, I AM GLAD YOU CAME. WE NEED TO TALK.
TALK? IS NOW THE TIME OR THE PLACE, REMY? WE SHOULD BE OFF BEFORE --
JEAN-LUC MARVELS AT ALL THIS -- FOR EVEN A MASTER OF THIEVES SUCH AS HE NEVER DREAMED OF MEETING SHE WHO FOUNDED THE GUILDS THAT GUIDE HIS LIFE.
THERE CAN BE NO OTHER TIME.
NO -- JULIEN?
THE ELIXIR..! Oh LORD... THE ELIXIR...
THEN IT IS TRUE? THIS... JULIEN'S CONDITION... COULD HAVE BEEN CAUSED BY THE ELIXIR OF LIFE?
YES. I HAVE SEEN IT HAPPEN BEFORE.
YOU KNEW ABOUT THIS DANGER?
WE HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN AND ACCEPTED THE RISK, MY SON.
NOTHING COMES WITHOUT ITS PRICE. AND FOR A LIFE LONGER THAN MOST HUMANS COULD EVER DREAM OF..!
VERY FEW EXPERIENCE THE SIDE EFFECT. THEY SUFFER. THEY CRAVE MORE OF THE ELIXIR TO TAKE AWAY THE PAIN... TO HEAL THEM. IT DOES NO GOOD. AND--

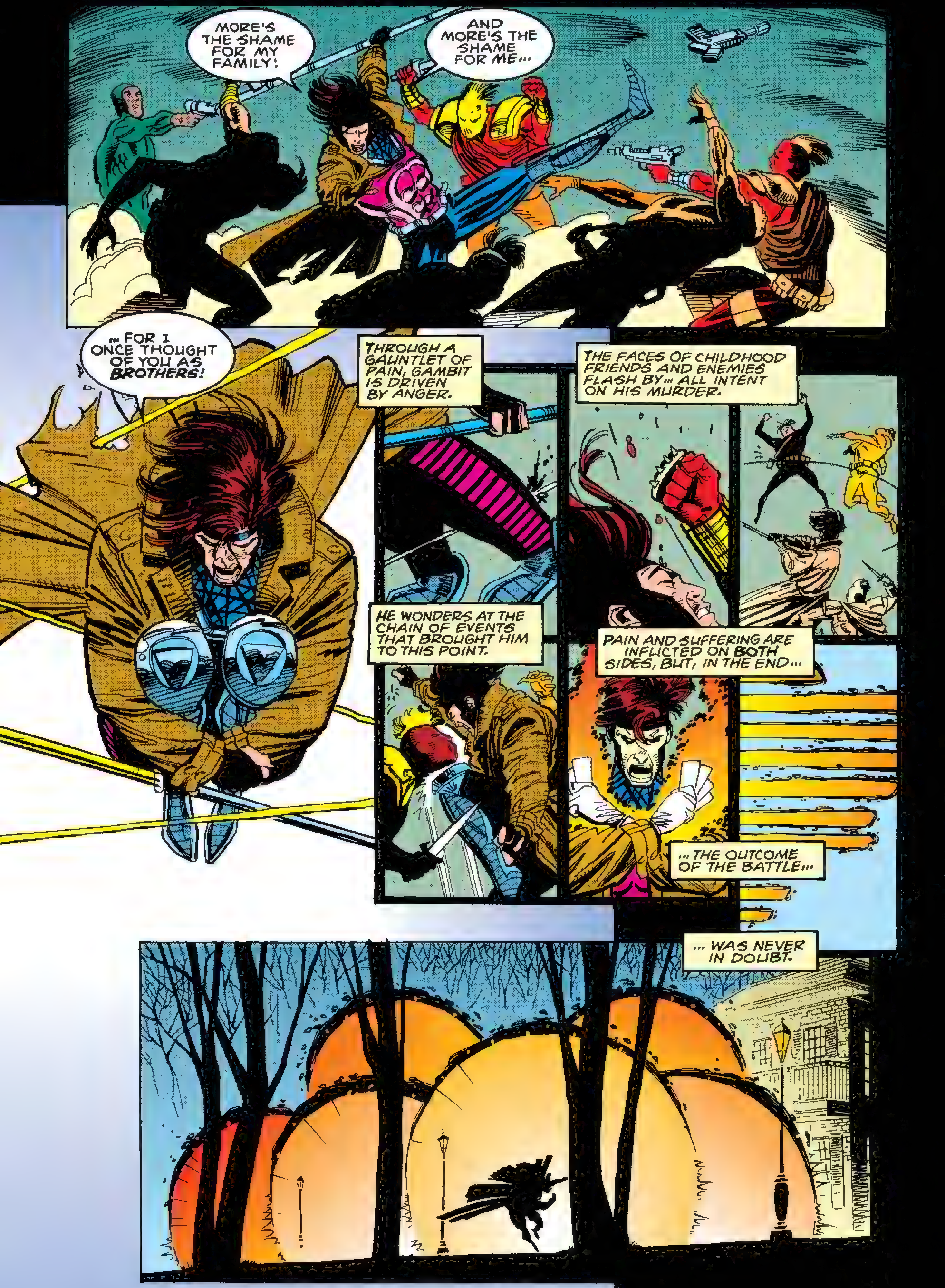

AND SUCH "GENEROSITY" WOULD TAKE THE PRECIOUS FLUID AWAY FROM THOSE OF YOU WHO NEED IT FOR LONG LIFE? SO YOU LET THEM DIE.
YES IT IS OUR GREATEST SIN.
HOW CAN THE LOSS OF EVEN A FEW OF OUR GUILD... OUR FAMILY... BE WORTH THE RISK?
EACH MAKES THEIR OWN DECISION. ALL RISKS ARE KNOWN BEFORE IT EVER PASSES THEIR LIPS. FEW TURN IT DOWN.
AND NOW I MUST DECIDE THIS FATE FOR BELLA DONNA?!
I MUST GAMBLE WITH THE LIFE OF THE WOMAN I LOVED -- MY OWN WIFE?!
PLEASE... REMY... JUST A TASTE... IT WOULD MAKE SUCH A DIFFERENCE... I WOULD LEAVE YOU THEN... I --
FRAKOOM

REMY LEBEAU!
I, THE TITHE COLLECTOR, STAND HERE WITH ASSASSIN AND THIEF ALIKE.
YOU HAVE BEEN LABELED TRAITOR TO THEM AND TO CANDRA.
ONLY THE SPILLING OF YOUR TREACHEROUS BLOOD WILL ASSUAGE HER RAGE...
...AND RESTORE THE SACRED PACT WHICH YOU HAVE WILLFULLY BROKEN.
PREPARE TO DIE, THIEF.
FATHER, OUR GUILD STANDS AT THE SIDE OF THE ASSASSINS AGAINST ME.
GET DOWN!
IT LOOKS LIKE I BE HELPIN' MAKE SOME KIND OF PEACE BETWEEN THE GUILDS AT LAST, HEH?
I'VE GOT NO TIME FOR DIS FIGHT. BELLA DONNA'S WAITIN'.
ARE YOU INSANE, SON?
YOU DON'T STAND A CHANCE IN THIS CITY WITH BOTH GUILDS HUNTING YOU DOWN.
GIVE OUR PEOPLE THE ELIXIR... THEY'LL STAND BY YOUR SIDE AGAIN.
CAN'T BE DOIN' THAT, FATHER!
BELLA DONNA, SHE BE NEEDIN' THE ELIXIR IF SHE IS TO LIVE...
'SIDES, I'VE GOT ME A PLAN.

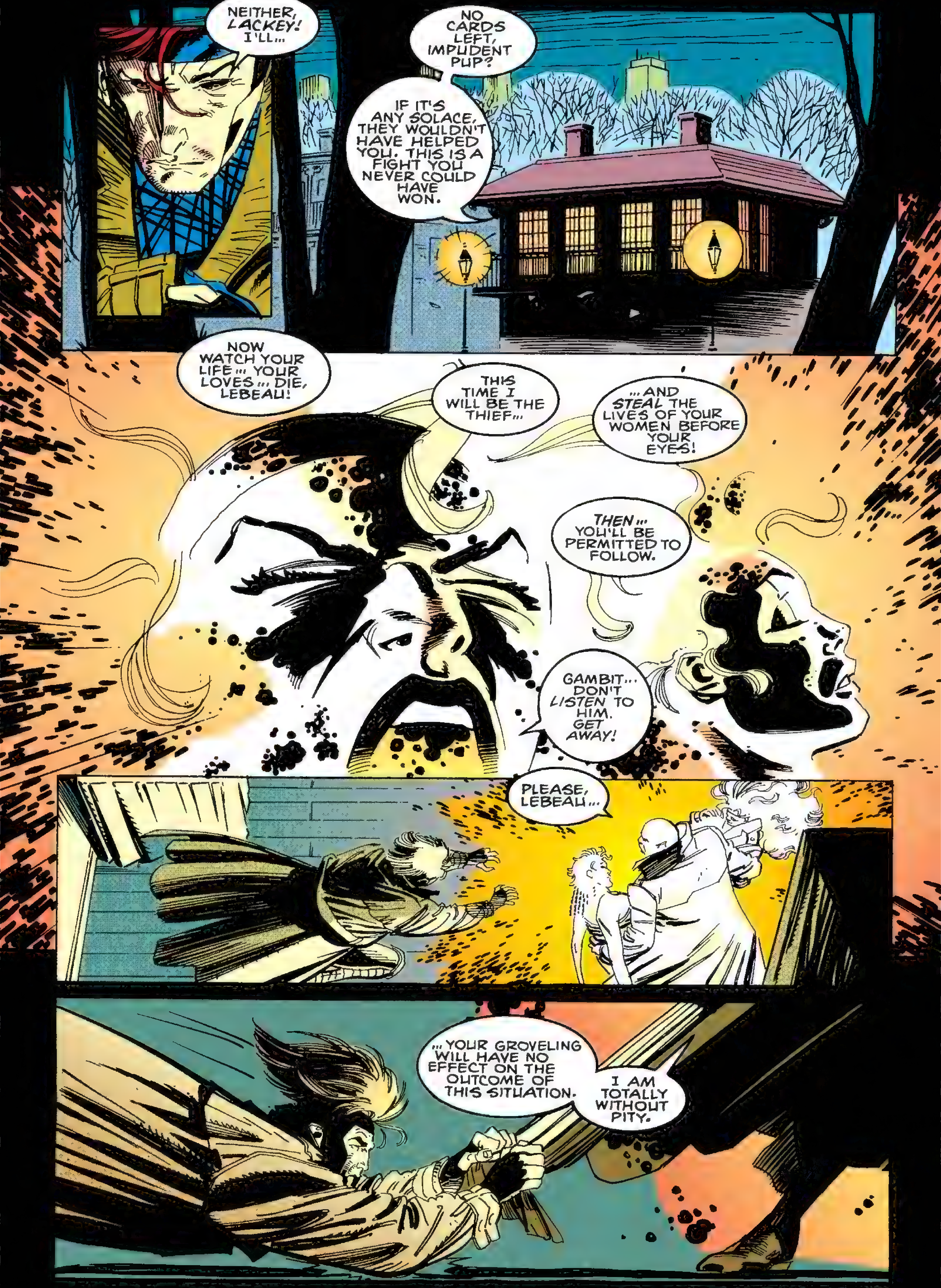

"HOPIN' I CAN PULL IT OFF WITHOUT KILLIN' ME...
"...OR TOO MANY OTHERS!"
WITH THE SHATTERING OF STAINED GLASS, THE MARBLE STATUE OF A LONG-FORGOTTEN SAINT PLUNGES INTO THE COURTYARD.
UNDER DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES, IT WOULD BE VIEWED AS A MIRACLE BY SOME...
...BUT THE THIEVES AND ASSASSINS RECOGNIZE THE GLOW SURROUNDING THE STATUE AS SOMETHING OTHER THAN DIVINE INTERVENTION.
GAMBIT'S MUTANT POWERS HAVE BEEN WITNESSED BY SOME OF THOSE WHO NOW RUN FOR COVER.
RARELY HAS HE USED THESE POWERS TO TRANSMUTE POTENTIAL ENERGY INTO KINETIC ENERGY ON SUCH A LARGE OBJECT.
THE SITUATION IS DESPERATE.
THE EXPLOSION DEAFENING.
MY SON IS GONE.
NO. THE COMMON STREET RAT WILL NOT ESCAPE ME AGAIN.
MAYBE NOT...
...BUT HE'LL BE GIVING IT A REAL GOOD TRY, TITHE COLLECTOR.
GAMBIT MUST *NOT* SURVIVE THE NIGHT!
KILL HIM FOR THE BENEFACTRESS... KILL HIM FOR THE *PACT*.

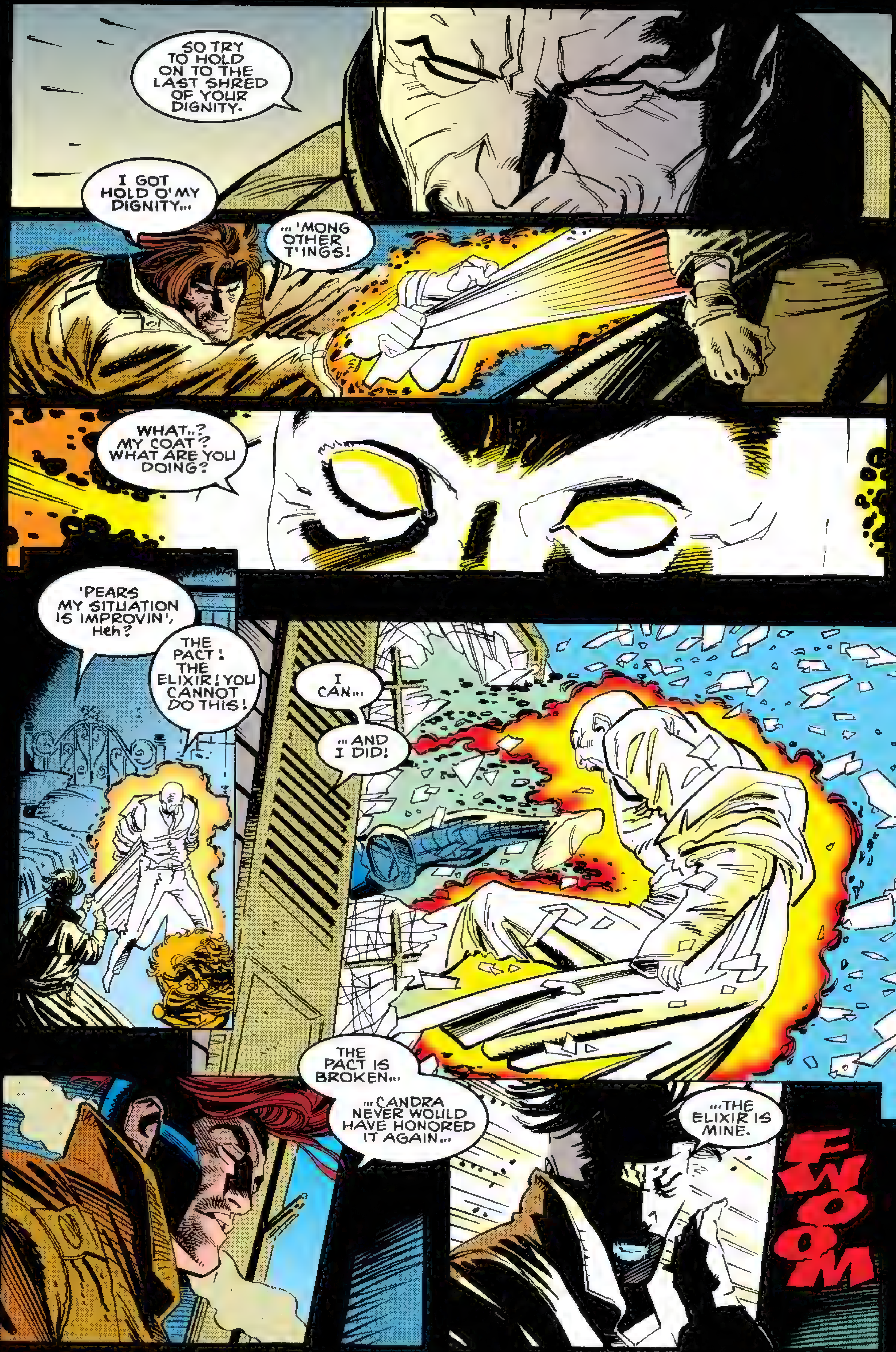
THE GARDEN DISTRICT...
...AN OASIS OF OLD WORLD CHARM AND TRANQUILITY...
...SEVERAL MILES... AND WORLDS... AWAY FROM THE MADNESS OF THE FRENCH QUARTER...
...BUT TONIGHT MADNESS IS CLOSING IN ON THIS PEACEFUL PLACE AT A FURIOUS PACE.
WHAT HAPPENED HERE, GIRL?
WHAT HAPPENED TO BELLA DONNA TO START HER CONVULSIN' LIKE THIS?!
ROGUE! TALK TO ME, GIRL!
I CAN'T BE HELPIN' THE CHILD IF YOU DON'T TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED!
BUT THE DESPERATE WORDS OF TANTE MATTIE DRIFT PAST ROGUE AS SHE RETREATS FURTHER AND FURTHER WITHIN HERSELF.
ON SOME LEVEL SHE IS AWARE OF BELLA DONNA'S CONDITION...
...AWARE THAT HER AGONY STARTED AS SOON AS THEIR FLESH MET.
ON SOME LEVEL SHE IS AWARE THAT THE MEMORIES TO WHICH SHE RETREATS ARE NOT HER OWN... RATHER, THEY ARE MEMORIES ROGUE'S MUTANT ABILITIES HAVE TAKEN FROM THE COMATOSE WOMAN.
RIGHT NOW, THIS VAGUE AWARENESS MEANS LITTLE TO HER.
ALL THAT MATTERS ARE THE MEMORIES...
...OF HIS SCENT...
...HIS TOUCH...
...AND HIS EMBRACE.
...GAMBIT...

"...WHERE ARE YOU?"
I'M HERE...
...BELLA DONNA.
SO QUIET HERE IN THE GARDEN DISTRICT.
THE REASON I BOUGHT THIS HOUSE. DREAMS OF SETTLIN' DOWN HERE SOME-DAY.
BUT DIS BE TOO QUIET.
NO DOGS BARKING.
NO CRICKETS CHIRPING.
THEY BE SEEKIN' TO KEEP ME FROM MY HOUSE...
...FROM MY WIFE.
IT WON'T BE HAPPENIN'.
VITE-VITE, BOYS! LET'S BE GETTIN' THIS OVER WITH...
...I'M IN A HURRY!
YOU KNOW, DESE DAYS, I'VE GOT TO BE ADMITTIN' THAT ASSASSINS AND T'IEVES, THEY BE LOOKIN' A LOT ALIKE IN THE DARK.
MORE'S THE SHAME FOR MY GUILD!


MORE'S THE SHAME FOR MY FAMILY!
AND MORE'S THE SHAME FOR *ME*...
... FOR I ONCE THOUGHT OF YOU AS *BROTHERS!*
THROUGH A GAUNTLET OF PAIN, GAMBIT IS DRIVEN BY ANGER.
THE FACES OF CHILDHOOD FRIENDS AND ENEMIES FLASH BY... ALL INTENT ON HIS MURDER.
HE WONDERS AT THE CHAIN OF EVENTS THAT BROUGHT HIM TO THIS POINT.
PAIN AND SUFFERING ARE INFLICTED ON **BOTH** SIDES, BUT, IN THE END...
...THE OUTCOME OF THE BATTLE...
... WAS NEVER IN DOUBT.

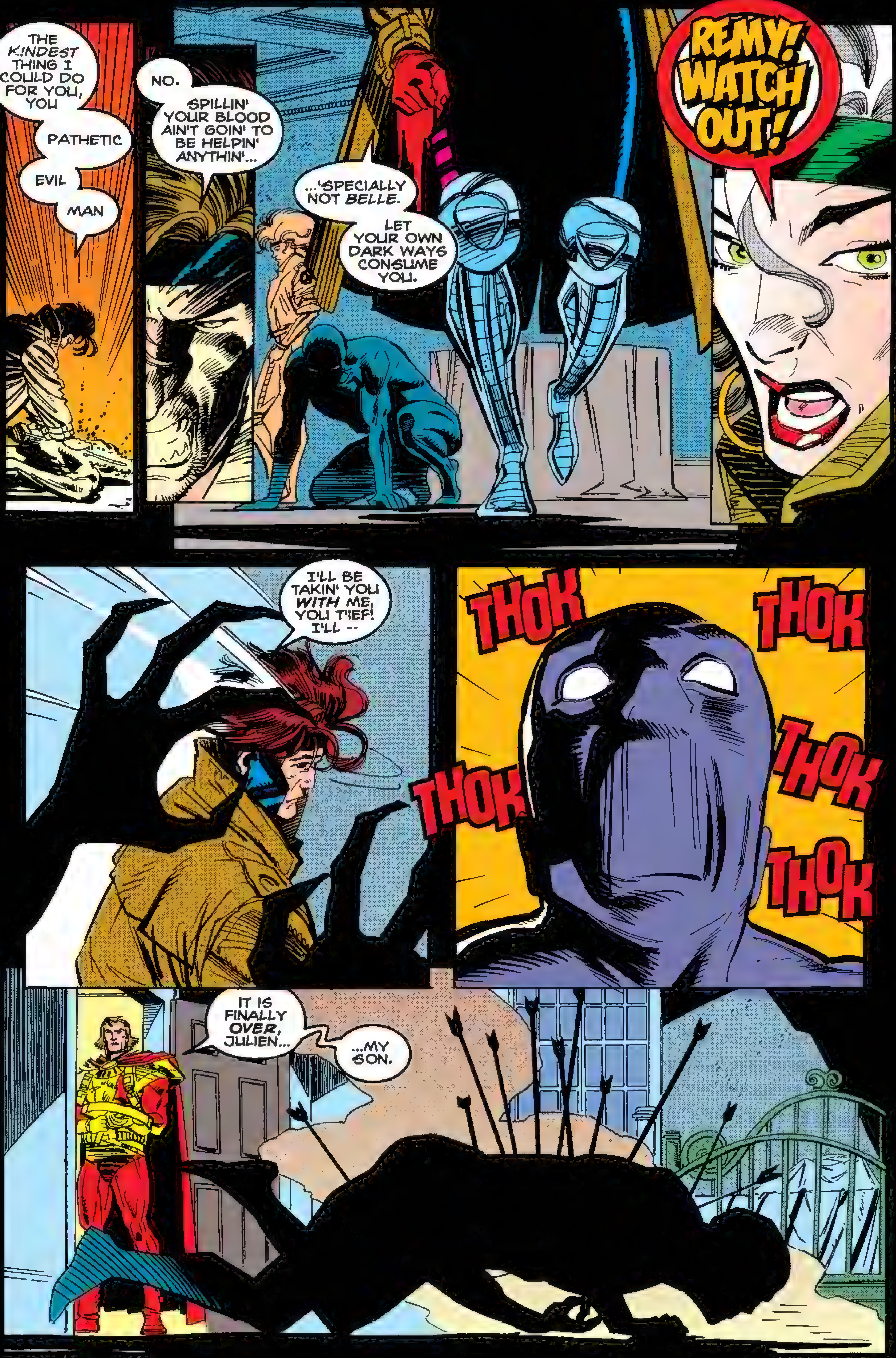
THIS HOUSE... MY HOUSE... I'LL NEVER LOOK AT IT WITHOUT THINKING OF THE BLOOD THAT HAS BEEN SPILLED HERE TONIGHT.
CURSE YOU, CANDRA! CURSE YOU F'R ALL OF DIS!
AND NOW I GOTTA DECIDE WHETHER TO BE GIVIN' BELLE THIS ELIXIR... RISK HER BEING TURNED INTO THE HORROR THAT JULIEN IS...
...MAYBE SHE BETTER OFF DEAD?
BUT NO! IF THERE IS A CHANCE I GOTTA TAKE IT...
A CHANCE TO START OVER MAYBE?
BUT WHAT ABOUT-- ROGUE, REMY...
HOW CAN YOU..?
TANTE MATTIE..!
WELCOME HOME, THIEF!
YOU DIDN'T REALLY EXPECT TO ESCAPE ME, DID YOU?
CANDRA'S ORDERS WERE THAT YOU WERE TO SUFFER INTENSELY, SO...
...WHICH WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE DIE FIRST... YOUR FORMER WIFE, OR YOUR MUTANT GIRLFRIEND?


NEITHER, *LACKEY!* I'LL...
NO CARDS LEFT, IMPUDENT PUP?
IF IT'S ANY SOLACE, THEY WOULDN'T HAVE HELPED YOU. THIS IS A FIGHT YOU NEVER COULD HAVE WON.
NOW WATCH YOUR LIFE... YOUR LOVES... DIE, LEBEAU!
THIS TIME *I* WILL BE THE THIEF...
...AND *STEAL* THE LIVES OF YOUR WOMEN BEFORE YOUR EYES!
THEN... YOU'LL BE PERMITTED TO FOLLOW.
GAMBIT... DON'T *LISTEN* TO HIM. *GET AWAY!*
PLEASE, LEBEAU...
...YOUR GROVELING WILL HAVE NO EFFECT ON THE OUTCOME OF THIS SITUATION.
I AM TOTALLY WITHOUT PITY.

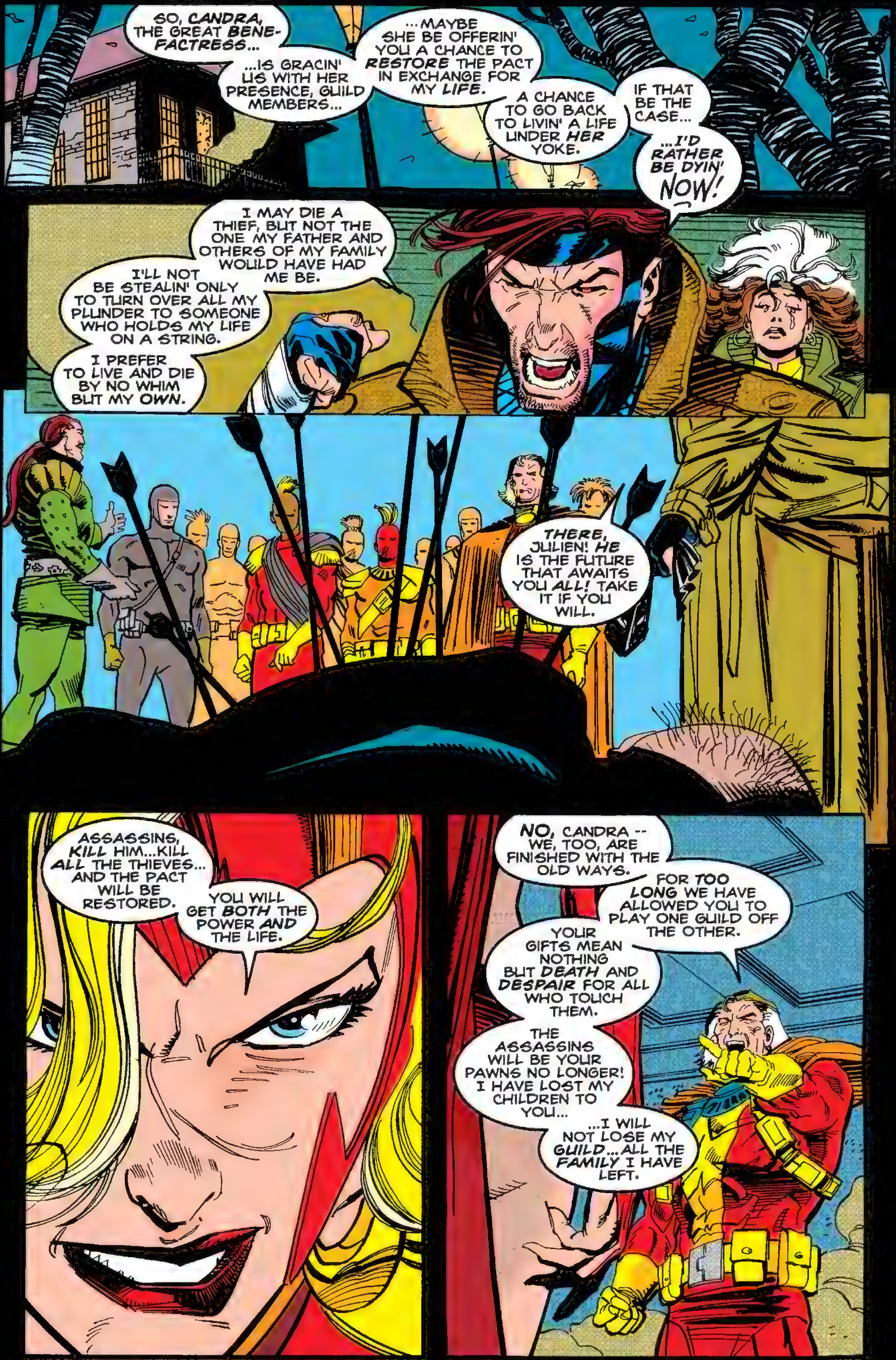

SO TRY TO HOLD ON TO THE LAST SHRED OF YOUR DIGNITY.
I GOT HOLD O' MY DIGNITY...
...'MONG OTHER T'INGS!
WHAT..? MY COAT? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
'PEARS MY SITUATION IS IMPROVIN', Heh?
THE PACT! THE ELIXIR! YOU CANNOT DO THIS!
I CAN...
...AND I DID!
THE PACT IS BROKEN...
...CANDRA NEVER WOULD HAVE HONORED IT AGAIN...
...THE ELIXIR IS MINE.
FWOOM

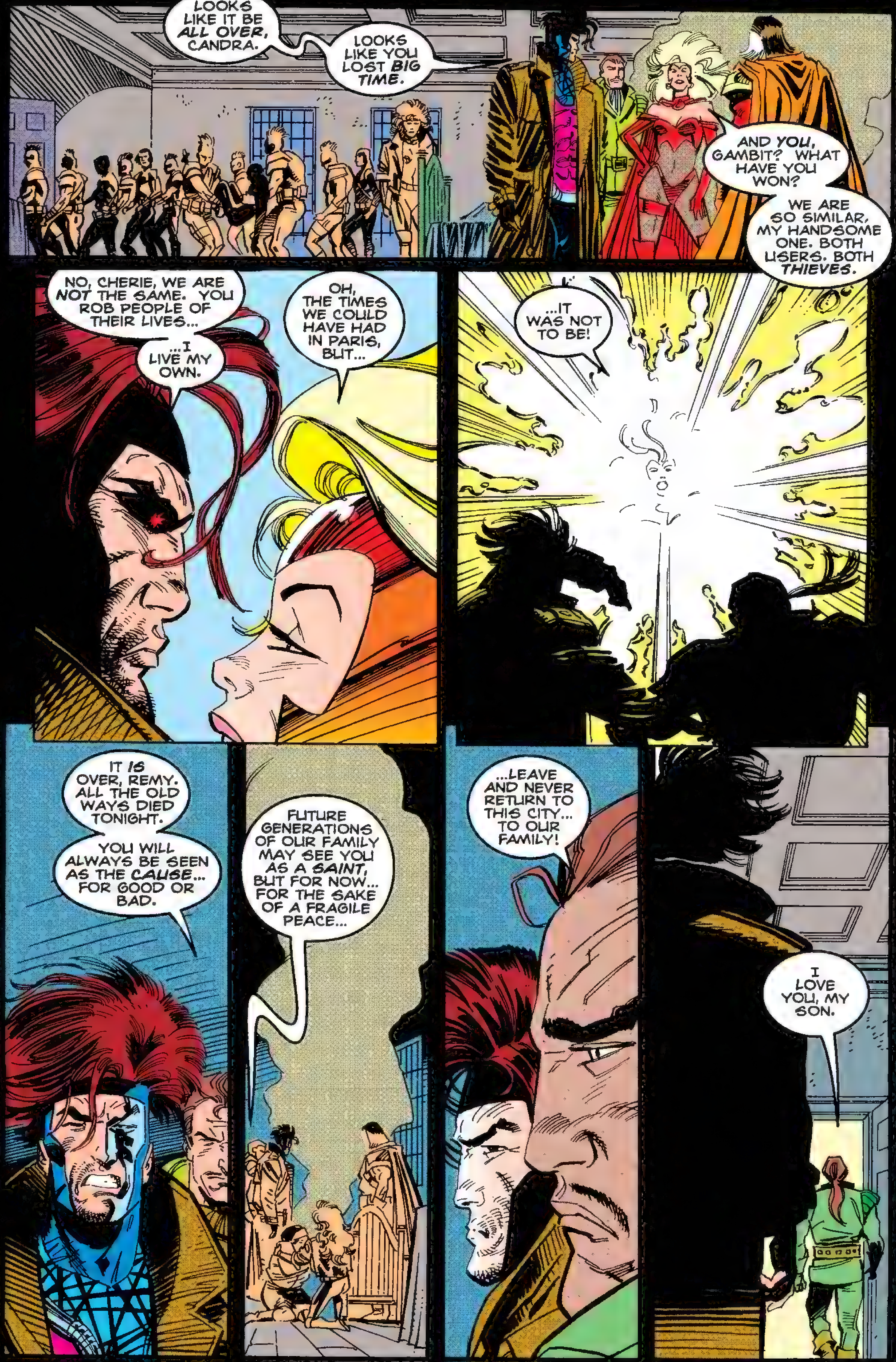
REMY...
...WE GOTTA *TALK*, SUGAH.
YOU GOTTA KNOW WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN ME AN' BELLE WHILE Y'ALL WERE GONE.
NOT NOW, PETITE.
I'VE GOT TO BE CONCENTRATIN'.
WHEN I TOUCHED HER... I CAN'T GET THE IMAGES OUT O' MY HEAD...
...IMAGES OF YOU AND BELLE...
...ONLY IN MY HEAD I SEE YOU AN' *ME*. **FEEL** YOU AN' ME. I...
...I LOVE YOU, REMY.
ROGUE, WHATEVER IT IS YOU'RE TRYIN' TO SAY, IT GOTTA WAIT.
ELIXIRS HAS GOT TO BE MIXED JUST RIGHT...
...I'VE NEVER DONE IT BEFORE...
...SO I'M ONLY GUESSIN'...
...I'M GAMBLING WITH BELLE'S *LIFE* HERE! PLEASE --
KTASH!!
THE ELIXIR IS ***MINE***, T'IEF!
NO, JULIEN! YOUR SISTER IS GOIN' TO LIVE. STAY AWAY...
...AND MAYBE I CAN HELP YOU TOO.

AREN'T YOU THE GENEROUS ONE, LEBEAU? BUT I'VE GOT THE ONLY BLADE THIS TIME, AND...
...I'VE GOT YOU!
SPASH
NO!
THE ELIXIR!
THAT WAS ALL OF IT, YOU IDIOT!
BELLE'S LAST CHANCE...
...AND YOU DESTROYED IT THE SAME WAY YOU DESTROY EVERYT'ING YOU TOUCH.
NOW'S TIME FOR ME TO BE DOIN' YOU A FAVOR, JULIEN.
SOMETHIN' I THOUGHT WAS FINISHED LONG 'GO.
ONLY THIS TIME I BE MAKING SURE YOU STAY DEAD!


THE *KINDEST* THING I COULD DO FOR YOU, YOU
PATHETIC
EVIL
MAN
NO.
SPILLIN' YOUR BLOOD AIN'T GOIN' TO BE HELPIN' ANYTHIN'...
...'SPECIALLY NOT *BELLE.*
LET YOUR OWN DARK WAYS CONSUME YOU.
REMY! WATCH OUT!
I'LL BE TAKIN' YOU *WITH* ME, YOU T'IEF! I'LL --
THOK
THOK
THOK
THOK
THOK
IT IS FINALLY *OVER,* JULIEN...
...MY SON.

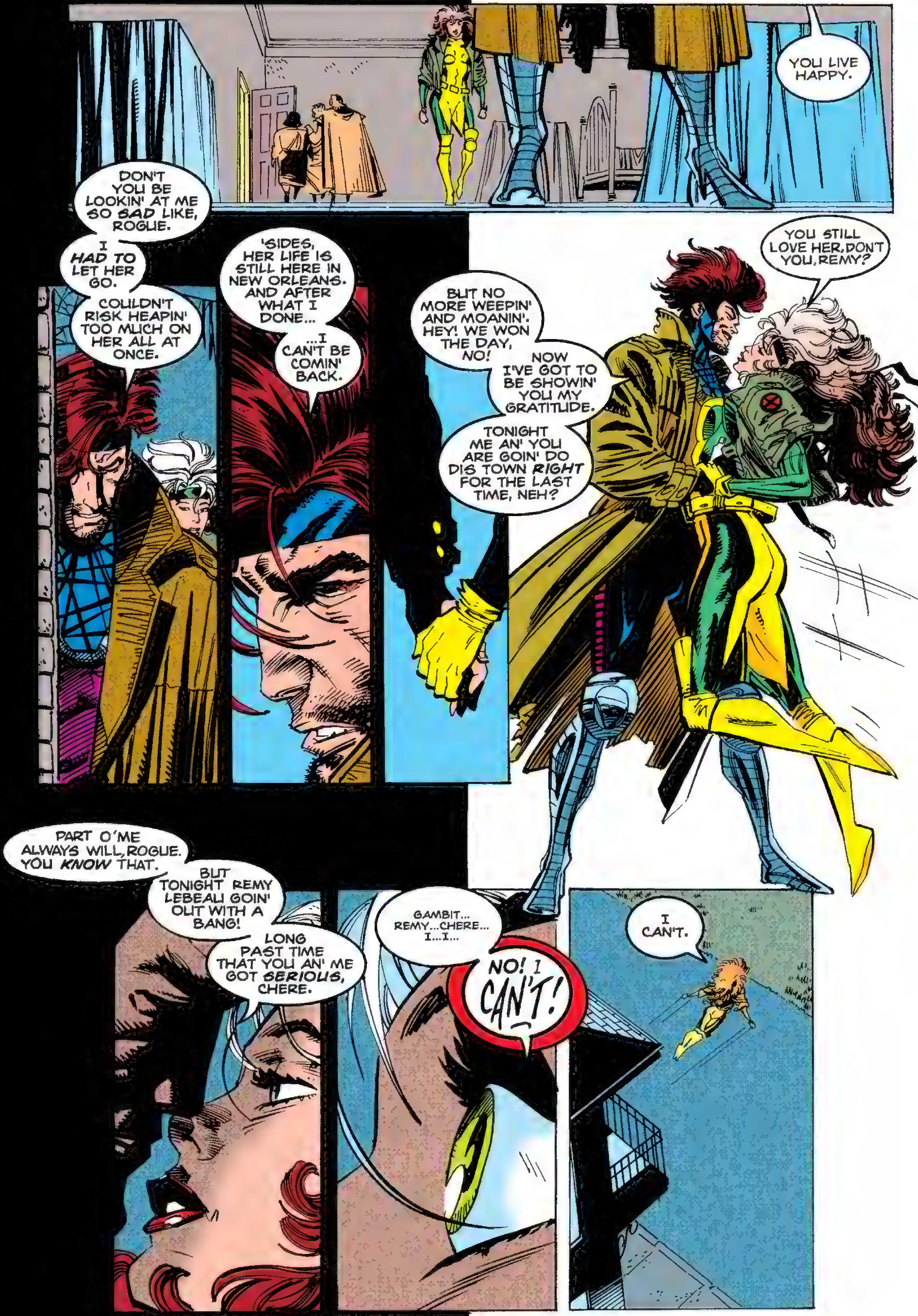
YOU TRIED YOUR *BEST* FOR MY DAUGHTER, REMY LEBEAU.
FOR THAT I THANK YOU.
NO, *MARIUS*, I FAILED YOU...
...AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, FAILED *BELLA DONNA*.
IT IS OVER, CHERE.
FORGIVE ME.
THIEVES... ASSASSINS... COME *FINISH* WHAT YOU CAME TO DO!
THE GAME'S PLAYED OUT. THE PACT IS BROKEN. THE *POWER* AND *LIFE* ARE GONE FOREVER.
KILL ME *NOW*... IF YOU WILL.
SUCH BRAVERY FROM THE *TRAITOR! BRAVO*, GAMBIT!
DO YOU *REALLY* EXPECT THEM TO GIVE UP *ALL* THAT I HAVE TO OFFER FOR *YOUR* THEATRICAL LITTLE *ACT?*
AN ACT FROM ONE WHO HAS *ALWAYS* BEEN A LIAR, A THIEF, AND A TRAITOR...
...AND ALWAYS WILL *BE*.

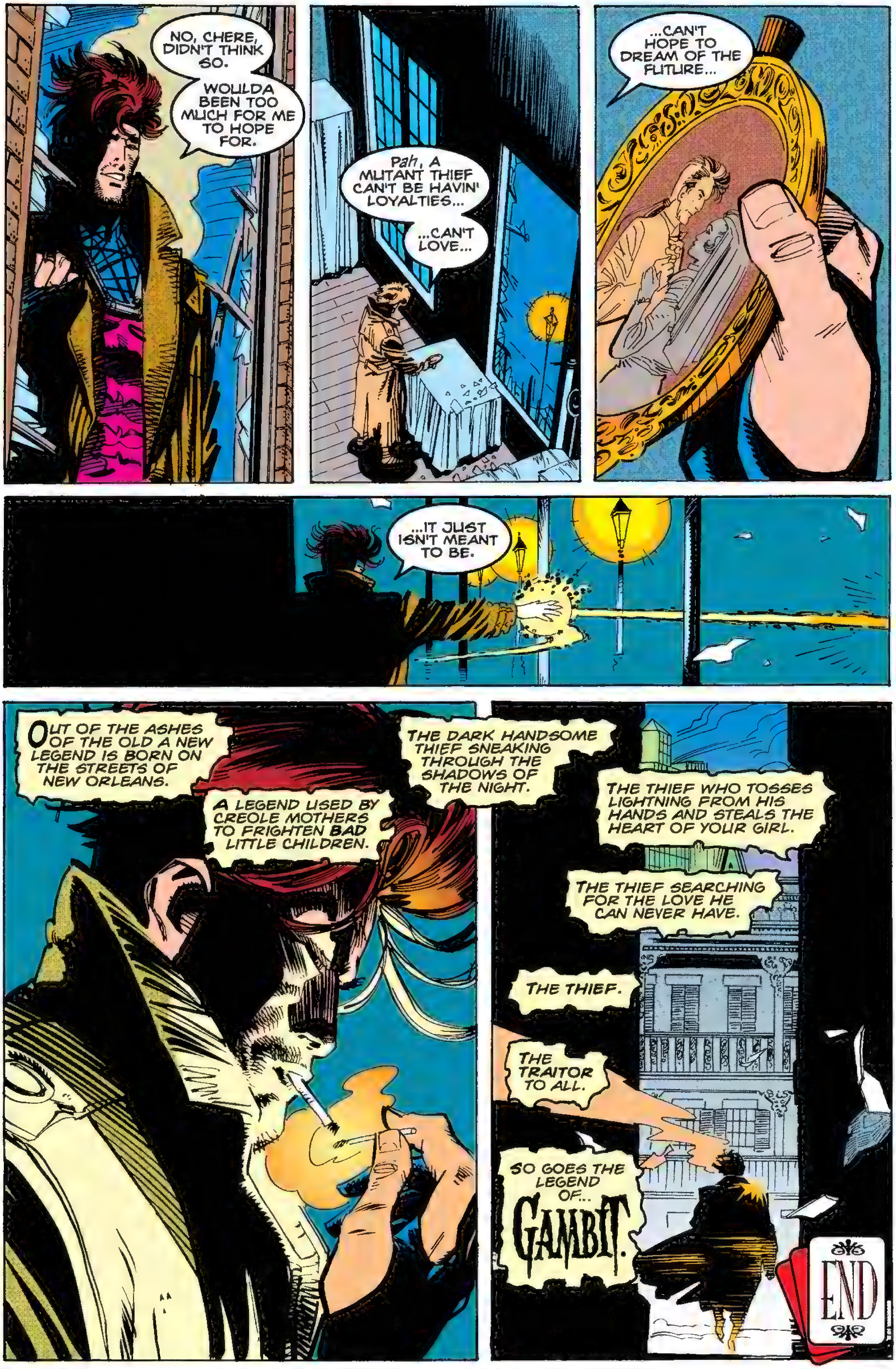

SO, CANDRA, THE GREAT BENEFACTRESS...
...IS GRACIN' US WITH HER PRESENCE, GUILD MEMBERS...
...MAYBE SHE BE OFFERIN' YOU A CHANCE TO RESTORE THE PACT IN EXCHANGE FOR MY LIFE.
A CHANCE TO GO BACK TO LIVIN' A LIFE UNDER HER YOKE.
IF THAT BE THE CASE...
...I'D RATHER BE DYIN' NOW!
I MAY DIE A THIEF, BUT NOT THE ONE MY FATHER AND OTHERS OF MY FAMILY WOULD HAVE HAD ME BE.
I'LL NOT BE STEALIN' ONLY TO TURN OVER ALL MY PLUNDER TO SOMEONE WHO HOLDS MY LIFE ON A STRING.
I PREFER TO LIVE AND DIE BY NO WHIM BUT MY OWN.
THERE, JULIEN! HE IS THE FUTURE THAT AWAITS YOU ALL! TAKE IT IF YOU WILL.
ASSASSINS, KILL HIM...KILL ALL THE THIEVES... AND THE PACT WILL BE RESTORED.
YOU WILL GET BOTH THE POWER AND THE LIFE.
NO, CANDRA -- WE, TOO, ARE FINISHED WITH THE OLD WAYS.
FOR TOO LONG WE HAVE ALLOWED YOU TO PLAY ONE GUILD OFF THE OTHER.
YOUR GIFTS MEAN NOTHING BUT DEATH AND DESPAIR FOR ALL WHO TOUCH THEM.
THE ASSASSINS WILL BE YOUR PAWNS NO LONGER! I HAVE LOST MY CHILDREN TO YOU...
...I WILL NOT LOSE MY GUILD...ALL THE FAMILY I HAVE LEFT.

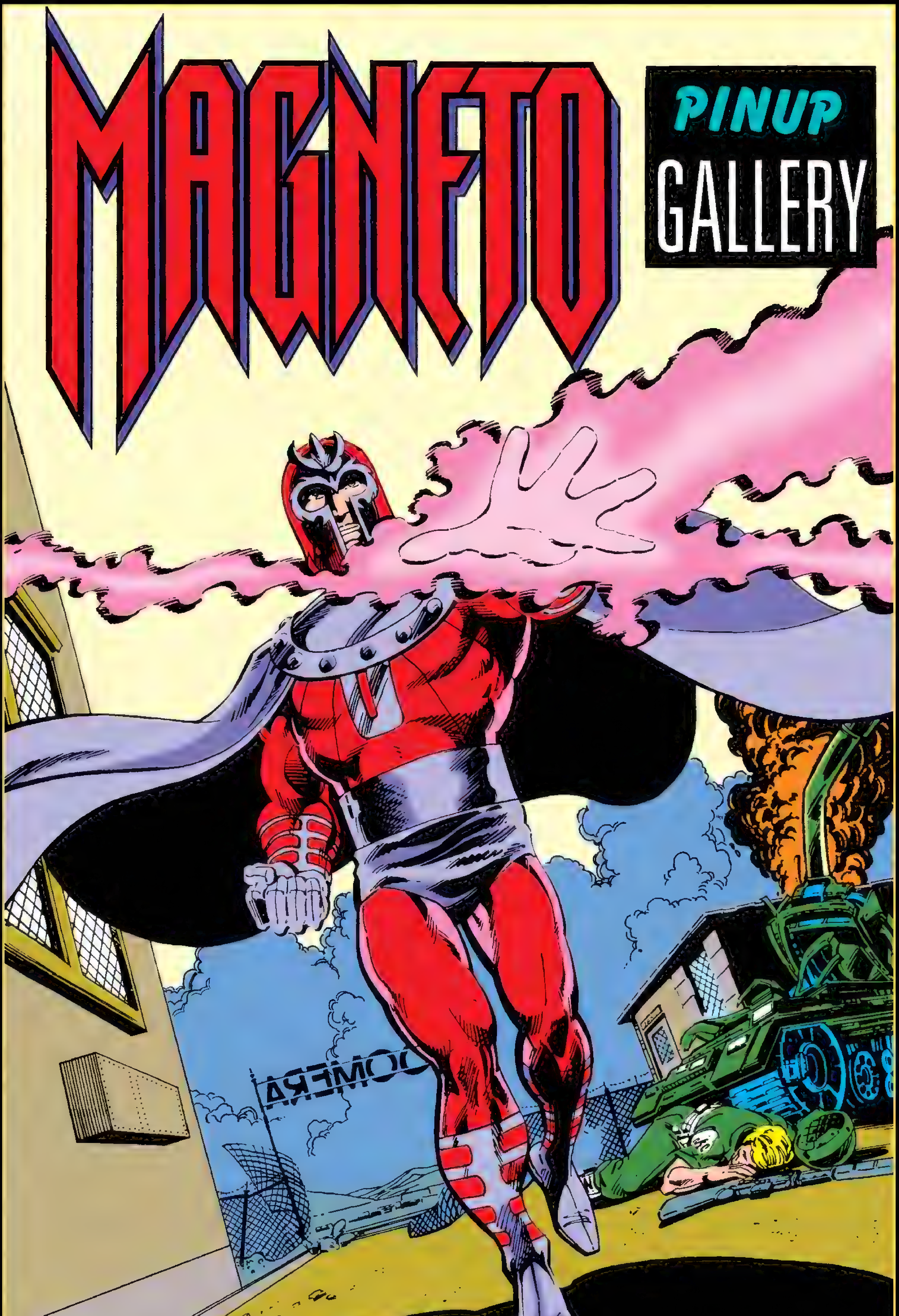

LOOKS LIKE IT BE *ALL OVER*, CANDRA.
LOOKS LIKE YOU LOST *BIG TIME*.
AND *YOU*, GAMBIT? WHAT HAVE YOU WON?
WE ARE SO SIMILAR, MY HANDSOME ONE. BOTH USERS. BOTH *THIEVES*.
NO, CHERIE, WE ARE *NOT* THE SAME. YOU ROB PEOPLE OF THEIR LIVES...
...I LIVE MY OWN.
OH, THE TIMES WE COULD HAVE HAD IN PARIS, BUT...
...IT WAS NOT TO BE!
IT *IS* OVER, REMY. ALL THE OLD WAYS DIED TONIGHT.
YOU WILL ALWAYS BE SEEN AS THE *CAUSE*... FOR GOOD OR BAD.
FUTURE GENERATIONS OF OUR FAMILY MAY SEE YOU AS A *SAINT*, BUT FOR NOW... FOR THE SAKE OF A FRAGILE PEACE...
...*LEAVE* AND NEVER RETURN TO THIS CITY... TO OUR FAMILY!
I LOVE YOU, MY SON.

I'LL TAKE MY DAUGHTER NOW, REMY.
BELLA DONNA'S FINAL DAYS WILL BE SPENT PEACEFULLY AMONGST HER FAMILY.
NO, MARIUS -- BELLE IS *STILL* MY WIFE...
THERE IS ONE LAST THING I MUST DO.
WHEN JULIEN ATTACKED ME, AND *SHATTERED* THE VIALS, THE CONTENTS SPILLED ONTO HIS BLANKET.
A CHANCE REMAINS THAT A FEW DROPS OF THE ELIXIR WERE SPARED.
CHERE, I PRAY TO THE SAINTS THAT I'M DOIN' THE RIGHT T'ING.
HE SQUEEZES THE LAST OF THE ELIXIR OF LIFE, TINGED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD, FROM THE TORN COVER.
HE WATCHES THE PRECIOUS FLUID FLOW OVER LIPS HE HAS KNOWN SO WELL.
HIS OWN HEART POUNDS IN ANTICIPATION OF A SIGN... *ANY* SIGN... THAT HIS EFFORTS HAVE NOT BEEN IN VAIN.
...A SLIGHT QUIVERING OF HER UPPER LIP...
...FOLLOWED UNDENIABLY BY...

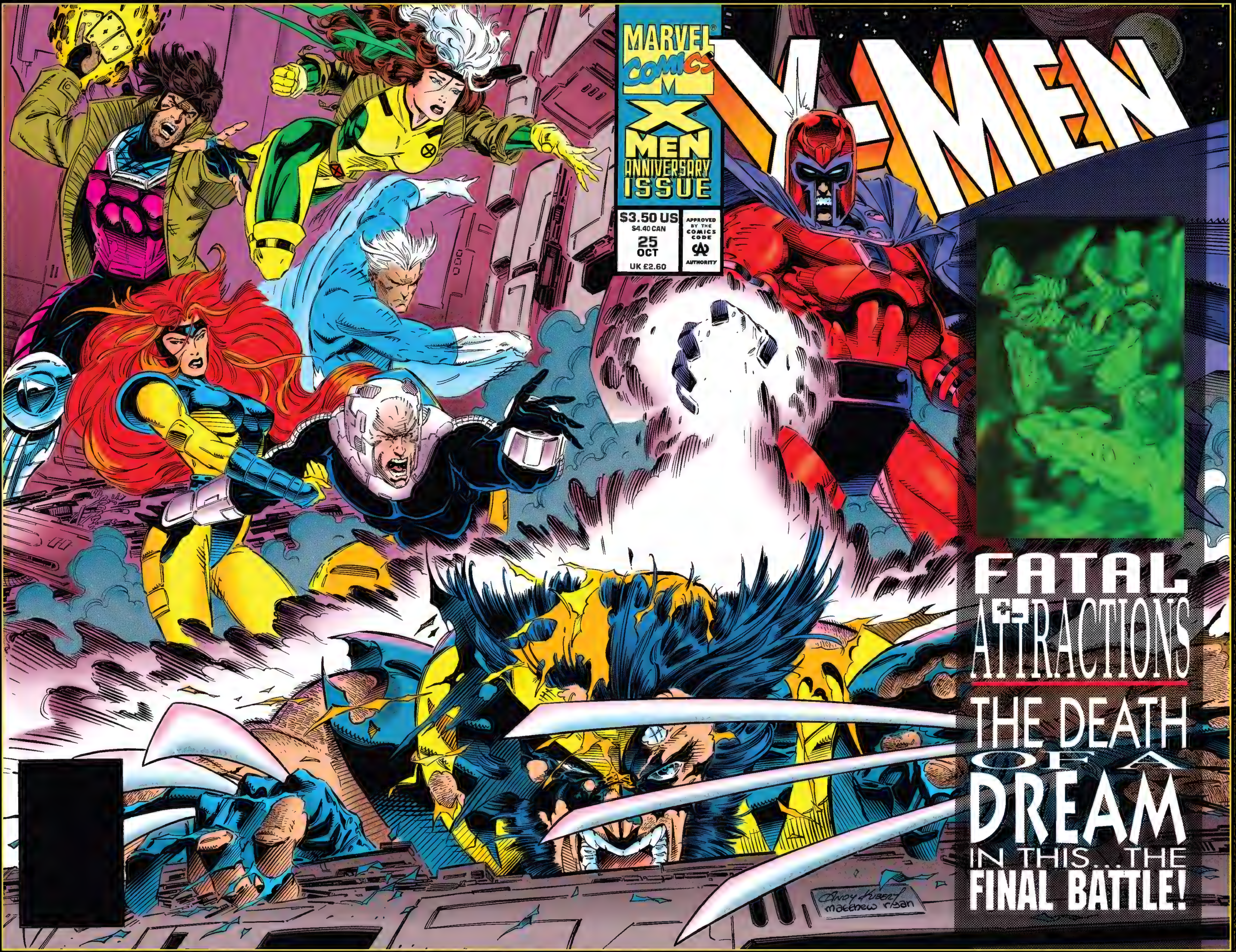
...LIFE!
YOU LIVE, CHERE! YOU LIVE!
MON DIEU! MY SWEET CHILD IS ALIVE.
OH BELLE-- I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE BACK.
WHO...
WHO ARE YOU?
WHAT AM I DOIN' HERE?
IT'S ME, P'TITE -- REMY!
YOU REMEMBER ME... I AM YOUR... YOUR...
MY WHAT? I CAN'T REMEMBER ANYTHING.
I'M...
I'M...
...A FRIEND.
JUST A FRIEND WHO'S BEEN WORRYIN' 'BOUT YOU, P'TITE.
THIS MAN HERE... HE BE YOUR DADDY.
HE'LL TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOU. YOU GO WITH HIM.


YOU LIVE HAPPY.
DON'T YOU BE LOOKIN' AT ME SO *SAD* LIKE, ROGUE.
I *HAD TO* LET HER GO.
COULDN'T RISK HEAPIN' TOO MUCH ON HER ALL AT ONCE.
'SIDES, HER LIFE IS STILL HERE IN NEW ORLEANS. AND AFTER WHAT I DONE...
...I CAN'T BE COMIN' BACK.
BUT NO MORE WEEPIN' AND MOANIN'. HEY! WE WON THE DAY, NO!
NOW I'VE GOT TO BE SHOWIN' YOU MY GRATITUDE.
TONIGHT ME AN' YOU ARE GOIN' DO DIS TOWN *RIGHT* FOR THE LAST TIME, NEH?
YOU STILL LOVE HER, DON'T YOU, REMY?
PART O'ME ALWAYS WILL, ROGUE. YOU *KNOW* THAT.
BUT TONIGHT REMY LEBEAU GOIN' OUT WITH A BANG!
LONG PAST TIME THAT YOU AN' ME GOT *SERIOUS*, CHERE.
GAMBIT... REMY...CHERE... I...I...
NO! I CAN'T!
I CAN'T.


NO, CHERE, DIDN'T THINK SO.
WOULDA BEEN TOO MUCH FOR ME TO HOPE FOR.
Pah, A MUTANT THIEF CAN'T BE HAVIN' LOYALTIES...
...CAN'T LOVE...
...CAN'T HOPE TO DREAM OF THE FUTURE...
...IT JUST ISN'T MEANT TO BE.
OUT OF THE ASHES OF THE OLD A NEW LEGEND IS BORN ON THE STREETS OF NEW ORLEANS.
A LEGEND USED BY CREOLE MOTHERS TO FRIGHTEN BAD LITTLE CHILDREN.
THE DARK HANDSOME THIEF SNEAKING THROUGH THE SHADOWS OF THE NIGHT.
THE THIEF WHO TOSSES LIGHTNING FROM HIS HANDS AND STEALS THE HEART OF YOUR GIRL.
THE THIEF SEARCHING FOR THE LOVE HE CAN NEVER HAVE.
THE THIEF.
THE TRAITOR TO ALL.
SO GOES THE LEGEND OF...
GAMBIT.
END


MAGNETO
PINUP
GALLERY
OMERA

MAGNETO #0 PINUP BY JOHN BYRNE, TERRY AUSTIN & CARLOS LOPEZ


MARVEL COMICS
X-MEN ANNIVERSARY ISSUE
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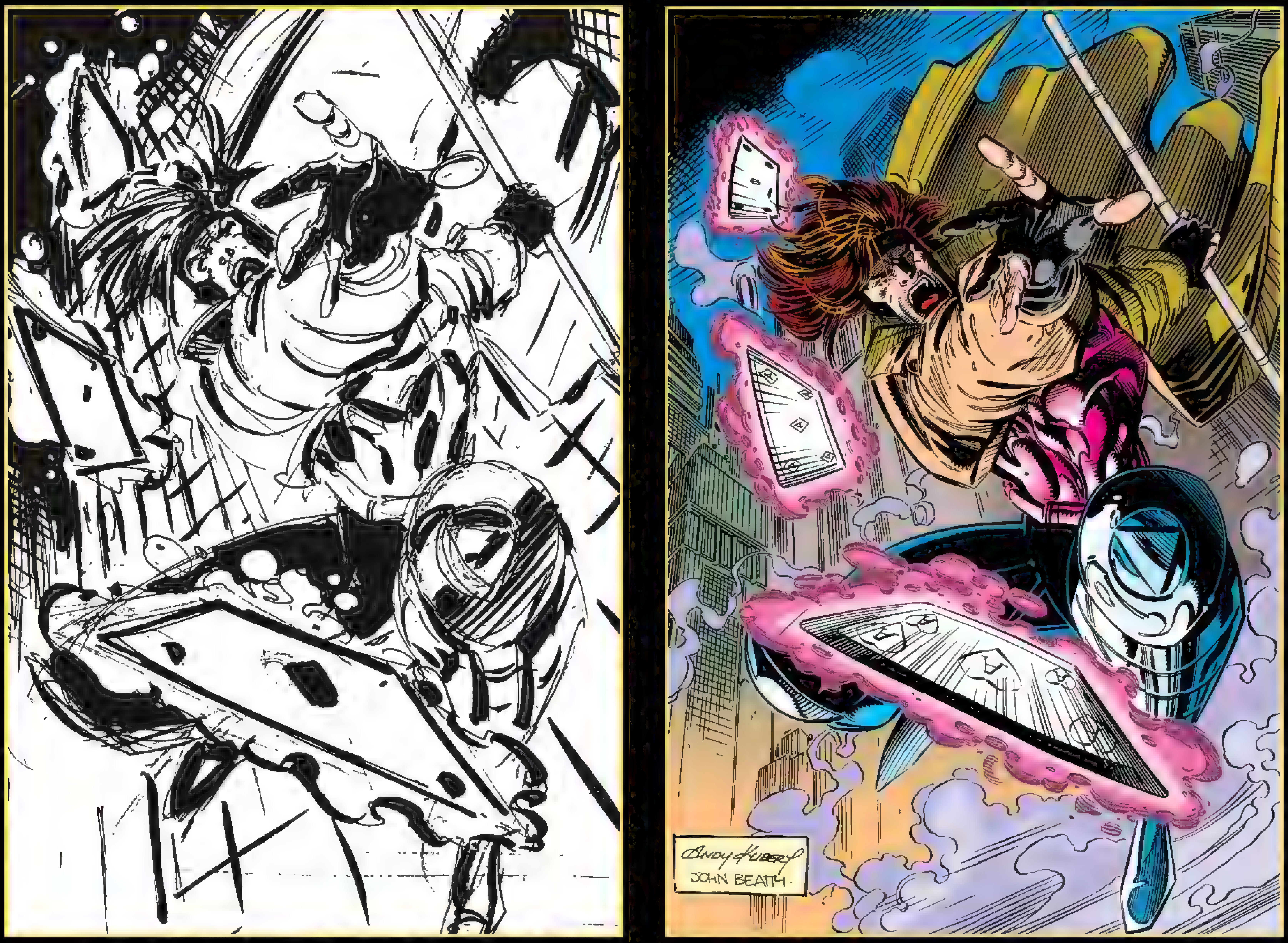
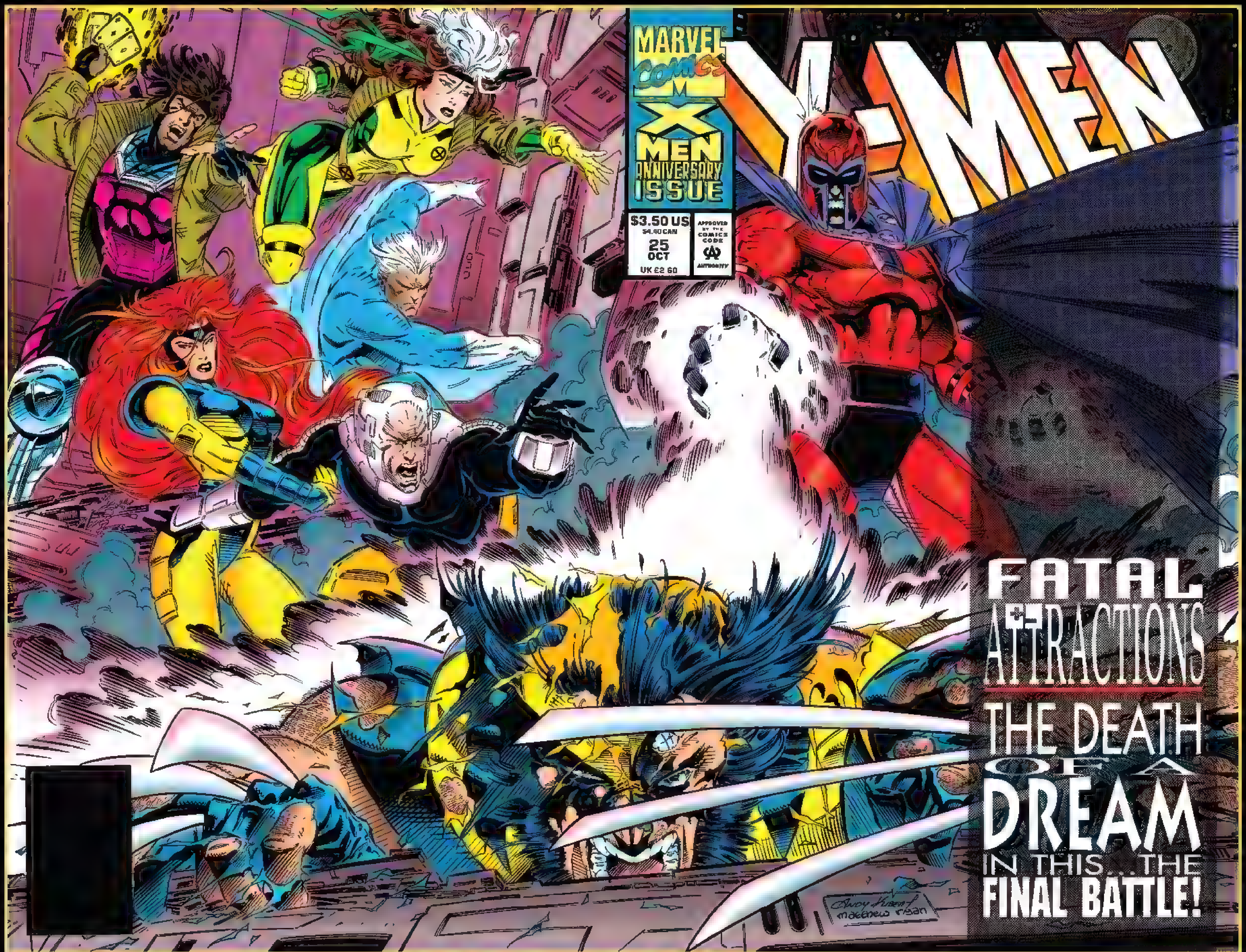
X-MEN
FATAL ATTRACTIONS
THE DEATH OF A DREAM
IN THIS... THE FINAL BATTLE!
Andy Kubert
Matthew Ryan


ANDY KUBERT
JOHN BEATTY

X-MEN #25 HOLOGRAM ORIGINAL SKETCH BY ANDY KUBERT, AND INKS BY JOHN BEATTY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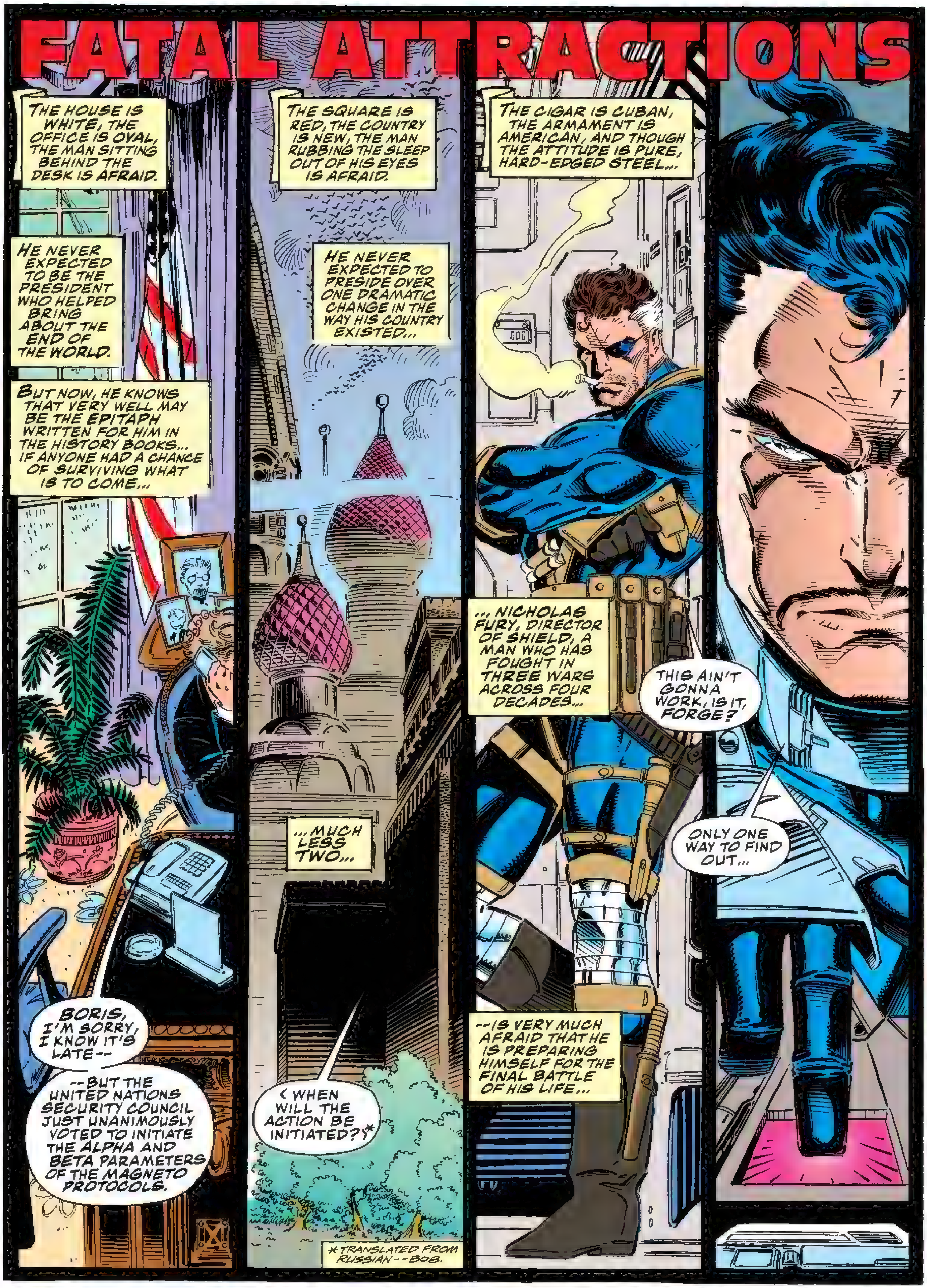
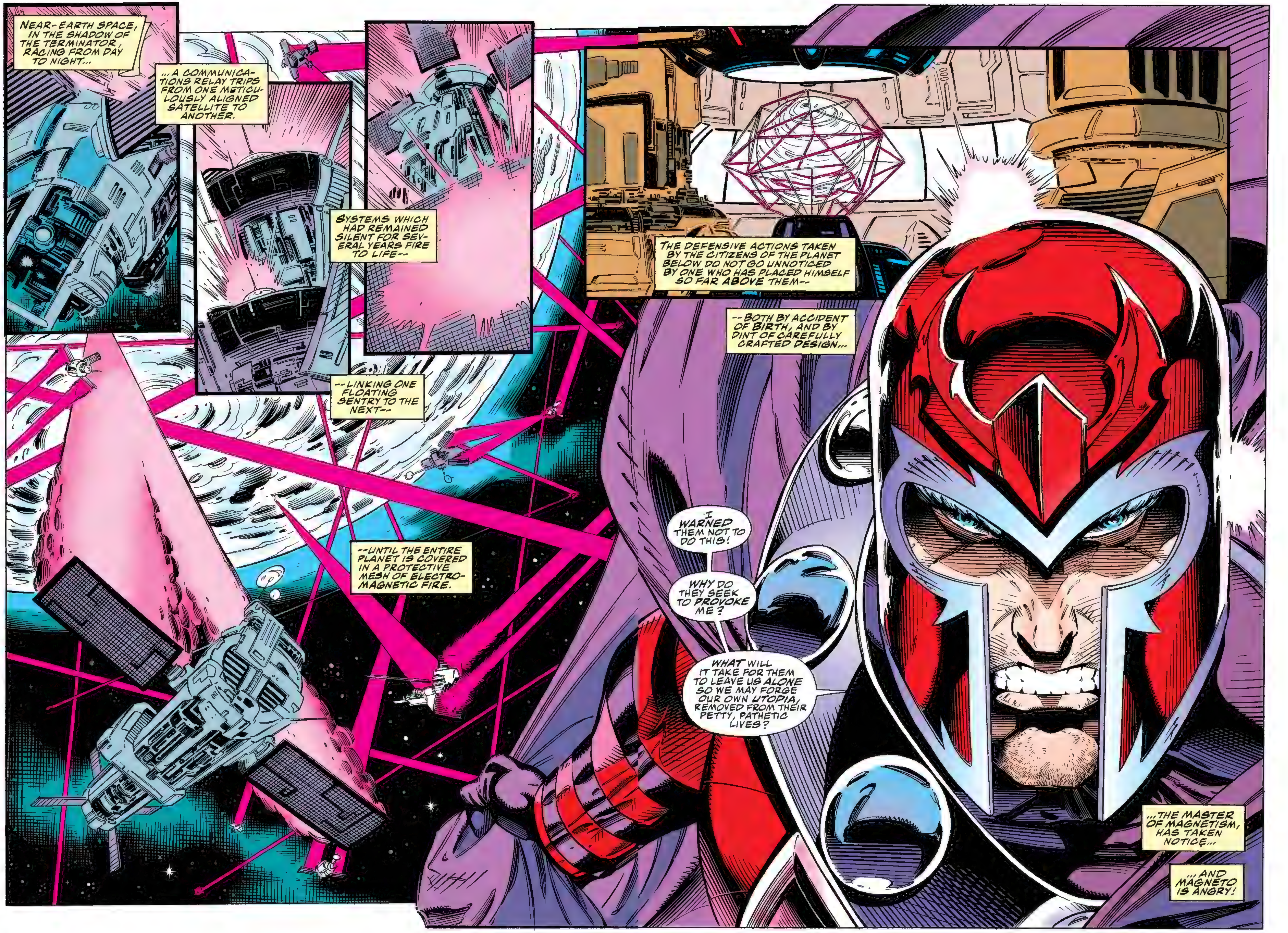
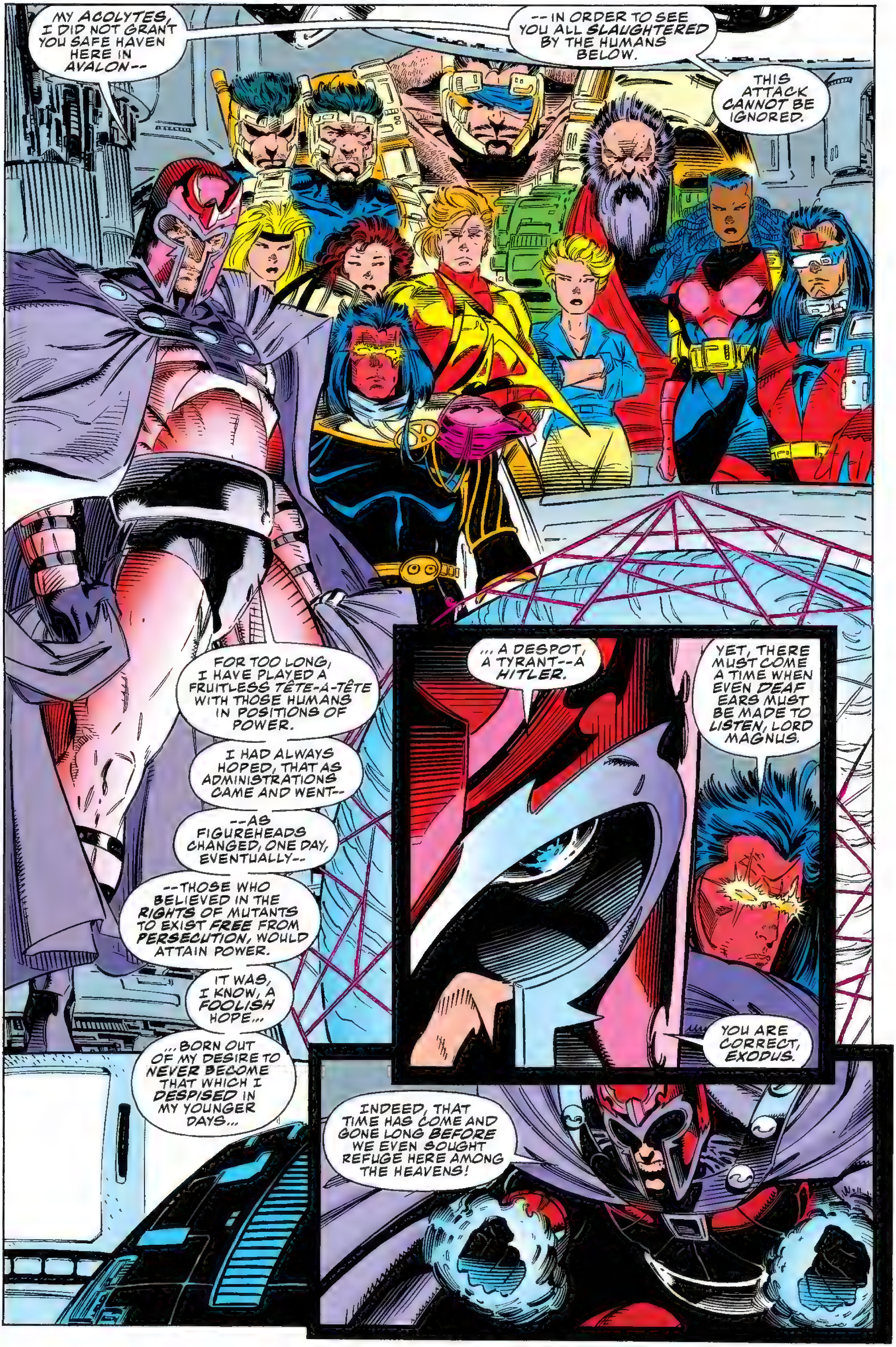
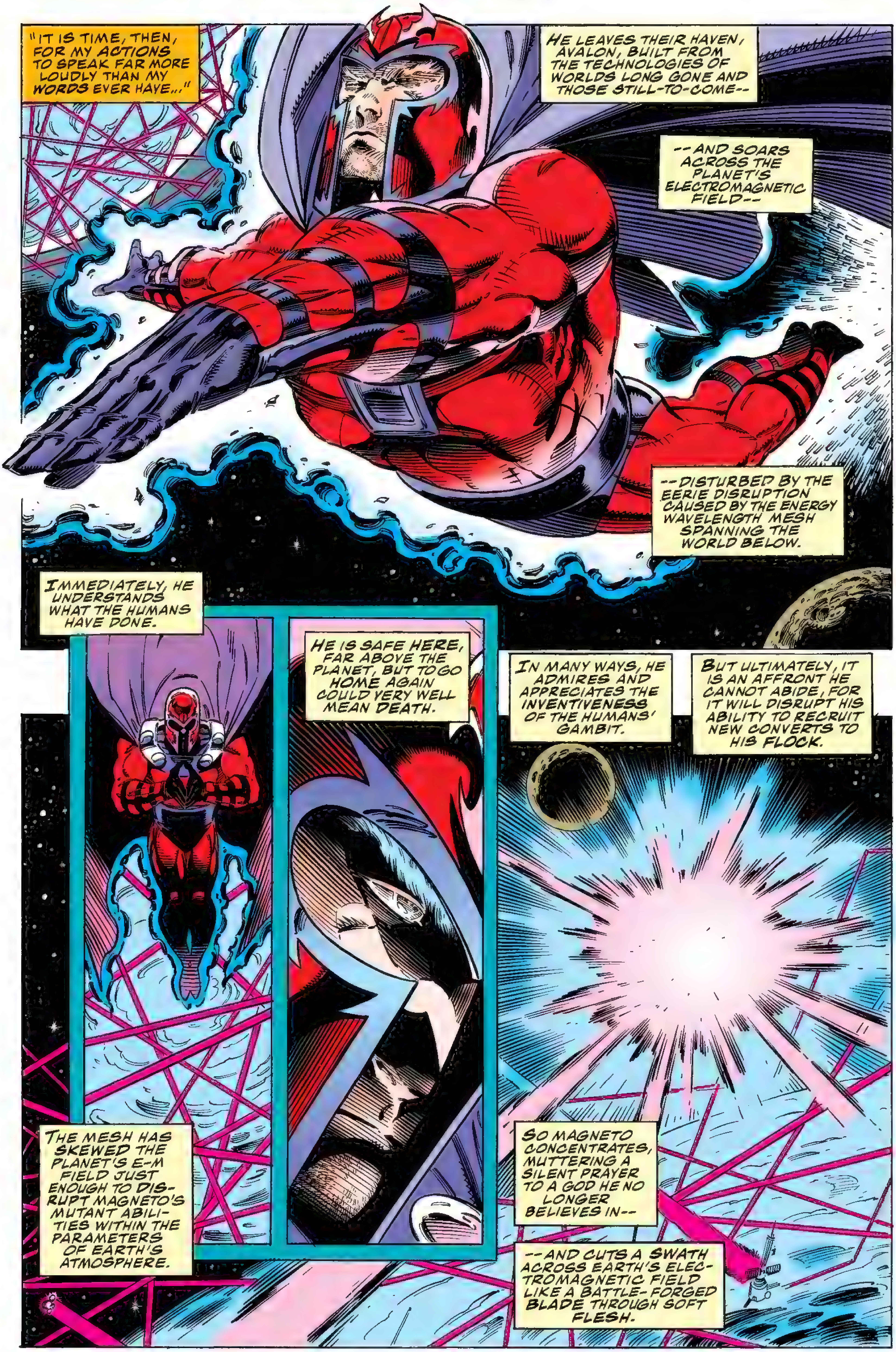
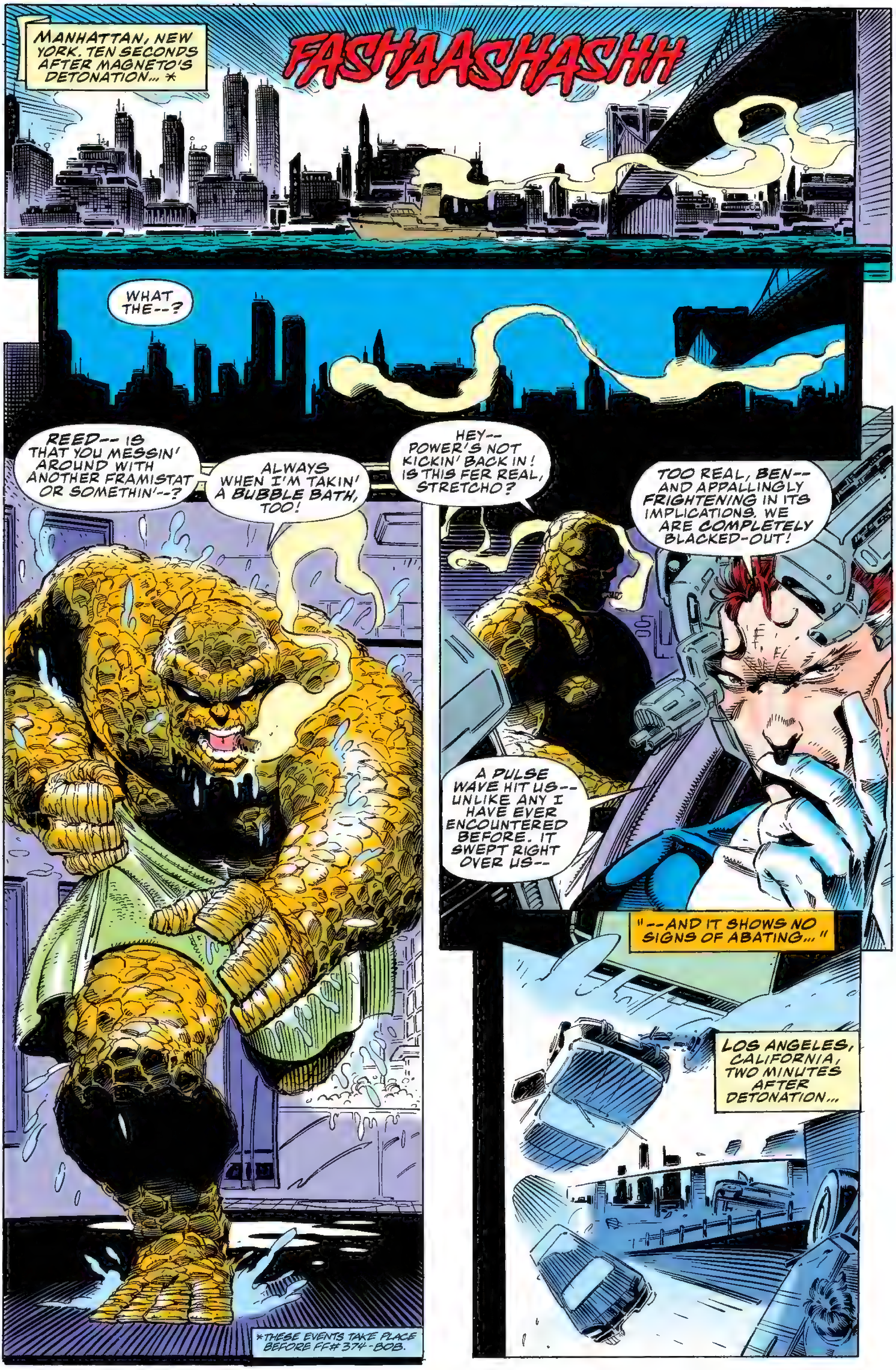
FULL COVER ART WITHOUT HOLOGRAM

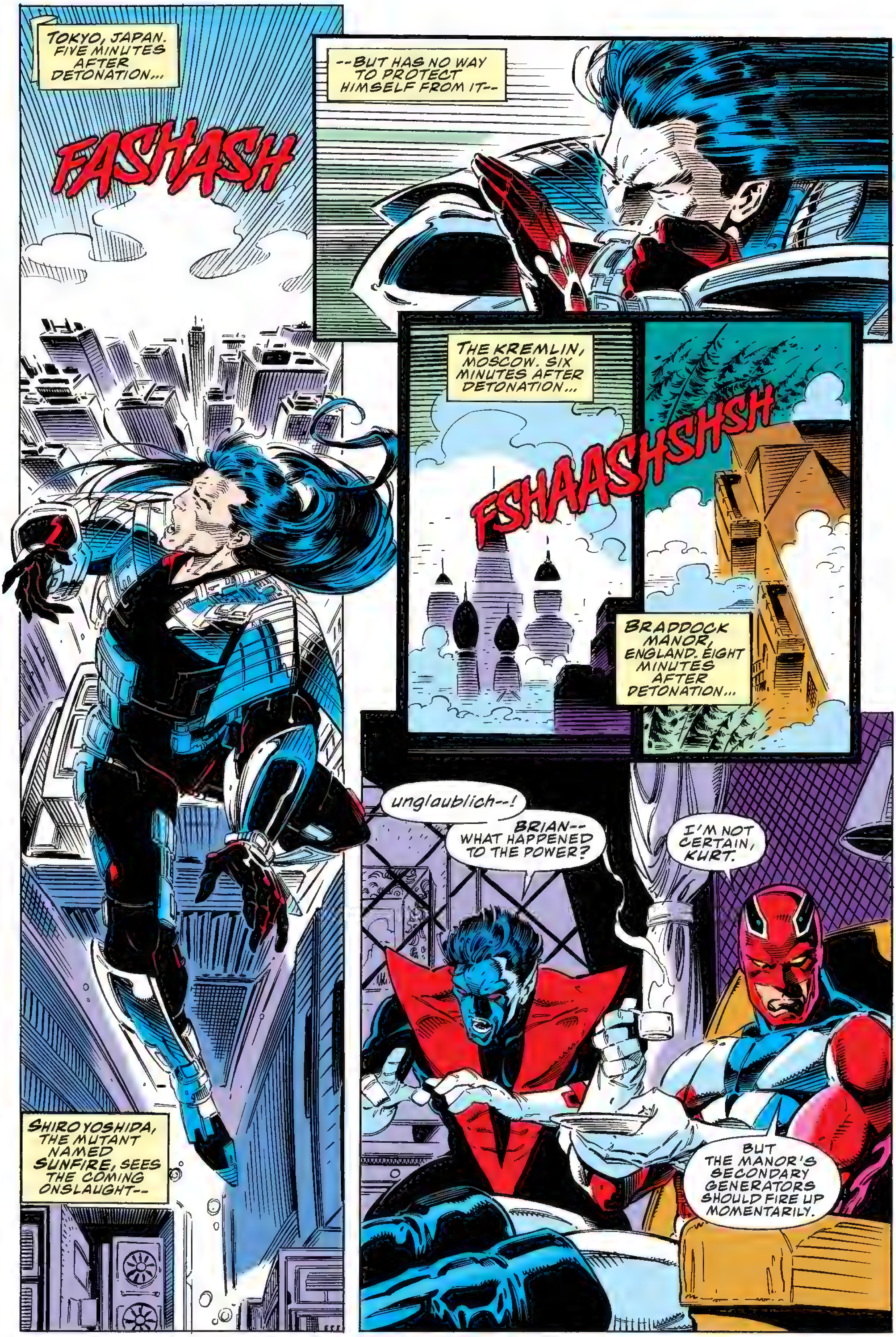

FATAL ATTRACTIONS
THE HOUSE IS WHITE, THE OFFICE IS OVAL, THE MAN SITTING BEHIND THE DESK IS AFRAID.
HE NEVER EXPECTED TO BE THE PRESIDENT WHO HELPED BRING ABOUT THE END OF THE WORLD.
BUT NOW, HE KNOWS THAT VERY WELL MAY BE THE EPITAPH WRITTEN FOR HIM IN THE HISTORY BOOKS... IF ANYONE HAD A CHANCE OF SURVIVING WHAT IS TO COME...
BORIS, I'M SORRY, I KNOW IT'S LATE--
--BUT THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL JUST UNANIMOUSLY VOTED TO INITIATE THE ALPHA AND BETA PARAMETERS OF THE MAGNETO PROTOCOLS.
THE SQUARE IS RED, THE COUNTRY IS NEW, THE MAN RUBBING THE SLEEP OUT OF HIS EYES IS AFRAID.
HE NEVER EXPECTED TO PRESIDE OVER ONE DRAMATIC CHANGE IN THE WAY HIS COUNTRY EXISTED...
...MUCH LESS TWO...
< WHEN WILL THE ACTION BE INITIATED? >*
*TRANSLATED FROM RUSSIAN--BOB.
THE CIGAR IS CUBAN, THE ARMAMENT IS AMERICAN, AND THOUGH THE ATTITUDE IS PURE, HARD-EDGED STEEL...
...NICHOLAS FURY, DIRECTOR OF SHIELD, A MAN WHO HAS FOUGHT IN THREE WARS ACROSS FOUR DECADES...
--IS VERY MUCH AFRAID THAT HE IS PREPARING HIMSELF FOR THE FINAL BATTLE OF HIS LIFE...
THIS AIN'T GONNA WORK, IS IT, FORGE?
ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT...

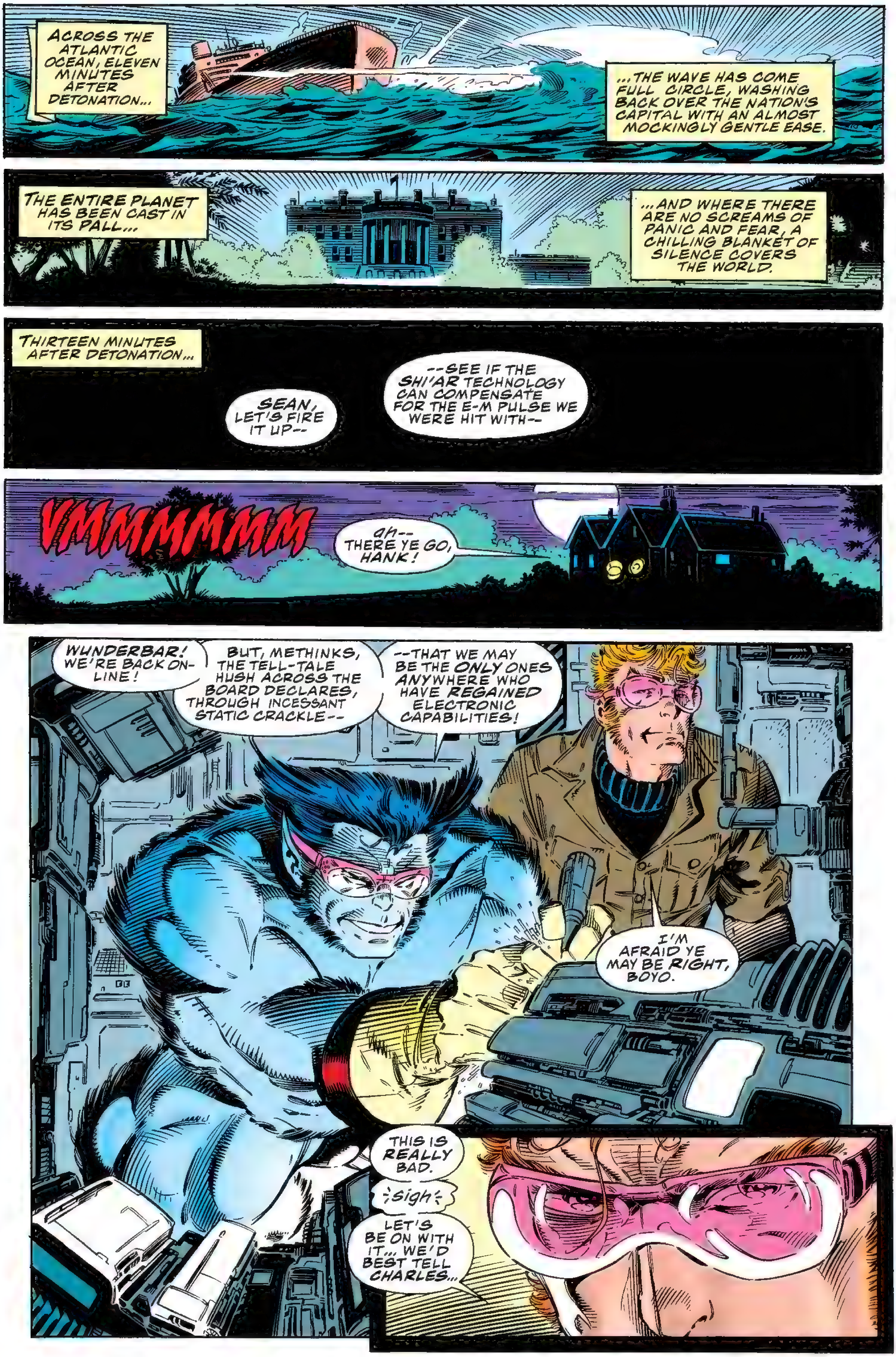

Near-Earth space, in the shadow of the terminator, racing from day to night...
...A communications relay trips from one meticulously aligned satellite to another.
Systems which had remained silent for several years fire to life--
--Linking one floating sentry to the next--
--Until the entire planet is covered in a protective mesh of electromagnetic fire.
The defensive actions taken by the citizens of the planet below do not go unnoticed by one who has placed himself so far above them--
--Both by accident of birth, and by dint of carefully crafted design...
I warned them not to do this!
Why do they seek to provoke me?
What will it take for them to leave us alone so we may forge our own utopia, removed from their petty, pathetic lives?
...The Master of Magnetism, has taken notice...
...And Magneto is angry!

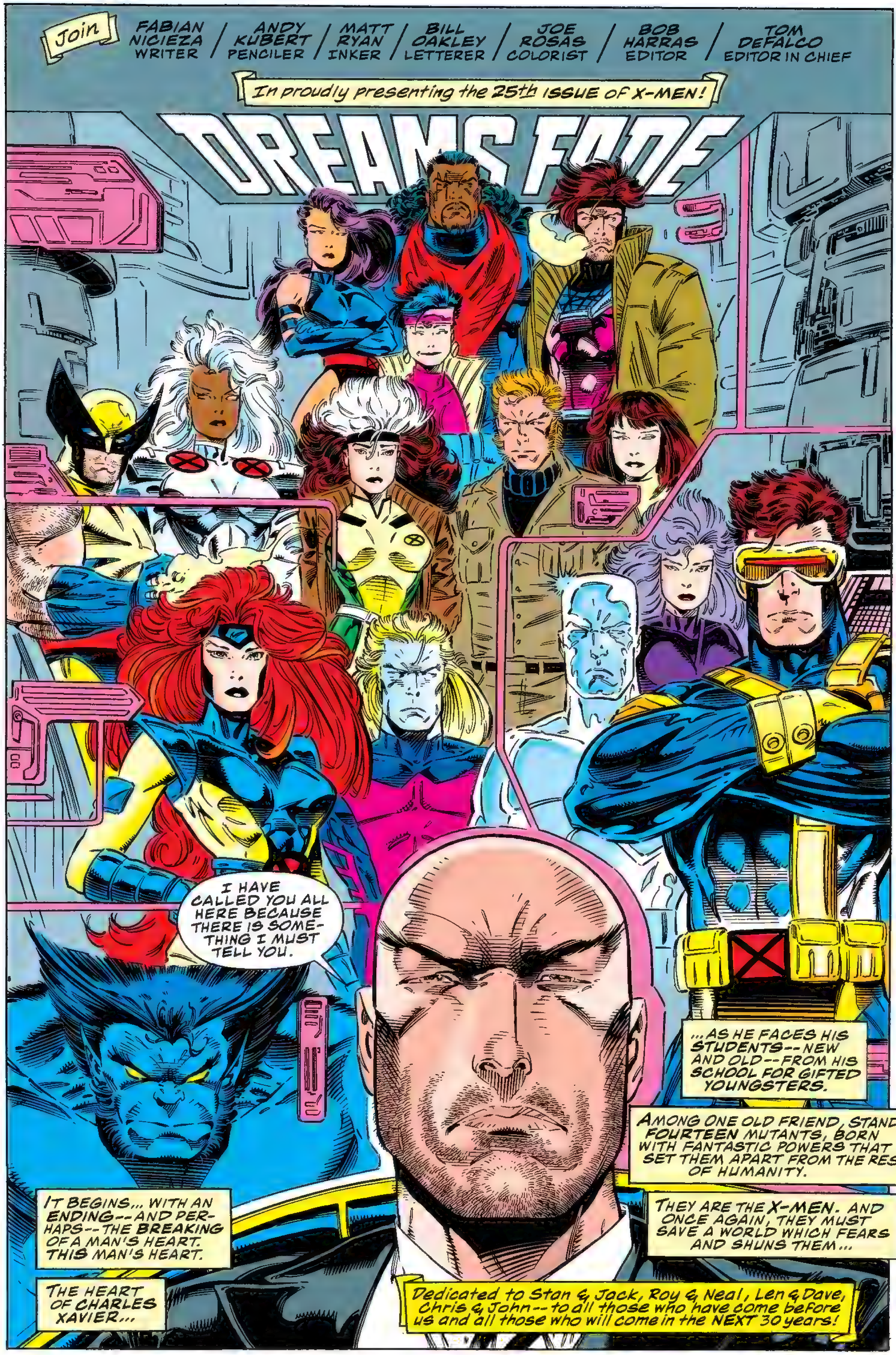

MY ACOLYTES, I DID NOT GRANT YOU SAFE HAVEN HERE IN AVALON--
--IN ORDER TO SEE YOU ALL SLAUGHTERED BY THE HUMANS BELOW.
THIS ATTACK CANNOT BE IGNORED.
FOR TOO LONG, I HAVE PLAYED A FRUITLESS TÊTE-A-TÊTE WITH THOSE HUMANS IN POSITIONS OF POWER.
I HAD ALWAYS HOPED, THAT AS ADMINISTRATIONS CAME AND WENT--
--AS FIGUREHEADS CHANGED, ONE DAY, EVENTUALLY--
--THOSE WHO BELIEVED IN THE RIGHTS OF MUTANTS TO EXIST FREE FROM PERSECUTION, WOULD ATTAIN POWER.
IT WAS, I KNOW, A FOOLISH HOPE...
...BORN OUT OF MY DESIRE TO NEVER BECOME THAT WHICH I DESPISED IN MY YOUNGER DAYS...
...A DESPOT, A TYRANT--A HITLER.
YET, THERE MUST COME A TIME WHEN EVEN DEAF EARS MUST BE MADE TO LISTEN, LORD MAGNUS.
YOU ARE CORRECT, EXODUS.
INDEED, THAT TIME HAS COME AND GONE LONG BEFORE WE EVEN SOUGHT REFUGE HERE AMONG THE HEAVENS!

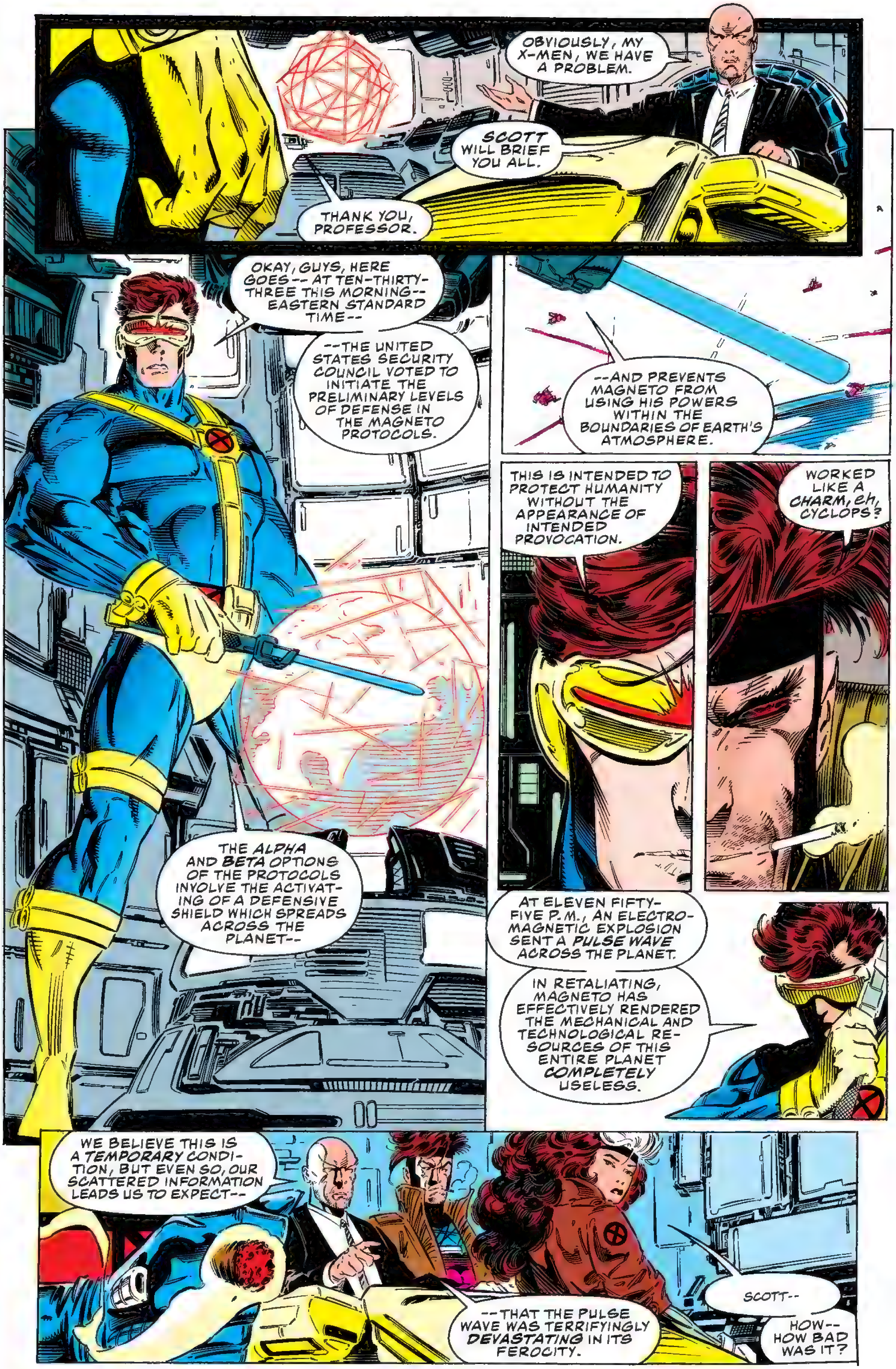

"IT IS TIME, THEN, FOR MY ACTIONS TO SPEAK FAR MORE LOUDLY THAN MY WORDS EVER HAVE..."
HE LEAVES THEIR HAVEN, AVALON, BUILT FROM THE TECHNOLOGIES OF WORLDS LONG GONE AND THOSE STILL-TO-COME--
--AND SOARS ACROSS THE PLANET'S ELECTROMAGNETIC FIELD--
--DISTURBED BY THE EERIE DISRUPTION CAUSED BY THE ENERGY WAVELENGTH MESH SPANNING THE WORLD BELOW.
IMMEDIATELY, HE UNDERSTANDS WHAT THE HUMANS HAVE DONE.
HE IS SAFE HERE, FAR ABOVE THE PLANET, BUT TO GO HOME AGAIN COULD VERY WELL MEAN DEATH.
IN MANY WAYS, HE ADMIRES AND APPRECIATES THE INVENTIVENESS OF THE HUMANS' GAMBIT.
BUT ULTIMATELY, IT IS AN AFFRONT HE CANNOT ABIDE, FOR IT WILL DISRUPT HIS ABILITY TO RECRUIT NEW CONVERTS TO HIS FLOCK.
THE MESH HAS SKEWED THE PLANET'S E-M FIELD JUST ENOUGH TO DISRUPT MAGNETO'S MUTANT ABILITIES WITHIN THE PARAMETERS OF EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE.
SO MAGNETO CONCENTRATES, MUTTERING A SILENT PRAYER TO A GOD HE NO LONGER BELIEVES IN--
--AND CUTS A SWATH ACROSS EARTH'S ELECTROMAGNETIC FIELD LIKE A BATTLE-FORGED BLADE THROUGH SOFT FLESH.


MANHATTAN, NEW YORK. TEN SECONDS AFTER MAGNETO'S DETONATION... *
FASHAASHASHH
WHAT THE--?
REED-- IS THAT YOU MESSIN' AROUND WITH ANOTHER FRAMISTAT OR SOMETHIN'--?
ALWAYS WHEN I'M TAKIN' A BUBBLE BATH, TOO!
HEY-- POWER'S NOT KICKIN' BACK IN! IS THIS FER REAL, STRETCHO?
TOO REAL, BEN-- AND APPALLINGLY FRIGHTENING IN ITS IMPLICATIONS. WE ARE COMPLETELY BLACKED-OUT!
A PULSE WAVE HIT US-- UNLIKE ANY I HAVE EVER ENCOUNTERED BEFORE. IT SWEPT RIGHT OVER US--
"--AND IT SHOWS NO SIGNS OF ABATING..."
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, TWO MINUTES AFTER DETONATION...
*THESE EVENTS TAKE PLACE BEFORE FF#374-BOB.


TOKYO, JAPAN. FIVE MINUTES AFTER DETONATION...
FASHASH
SHIRO YOSHIDA, THE MUTANT NAMED SUNFIRE, SEES THE COMING ONSLAUGHT--
--BUT HAS NO WAY TO PROTECT HIMSELF FROM IT--
THE KREMLIN, MOSCOW. SIX MINUTES AFTER DETONATION...
FSHAASHSHSH
BRADDOCK MANOR, ENGLAND. EIGHT MINUTES AFTER DETONATION...
unglaublich--!
BRIAN-- WHAT HAPPENED TO THE POWER?
I'M NOT CERTAIN, KURT.
BUT THE MANOR'S SECONDARY GENERATORS SHOULD FIRE UP MOMENTARILY.


ACROSS THE ATLANTIC OCEAN, ELEVEN MINUTES AFTER DETONATION...
...THE WAVE HAS COME FULL CIRCLE, WASHING BACK OVER THE NATION'S CAPITAL WITH AN ALMOST MOCKINGLY GENTLE EASE.
THE ENTIRE PLANET HAS BEEN CAST IN ITS PALL...
...AND WHERE THERE ARE NO SCREAMS OF PANIC AND FEAR, A CHILLING BLANKET OF SILENCE COVERS THE WORLD.
THIRTEEN MINUTES AFTER DETONATION...
SEAN, LET'S FIRE IT UP--
--SEE IF THE SHI'AR TECHNOLOGY CAN COMPENSATE FOR THE E-M PULSE WE WERE HIT WITH--
VMMMMMM
ah-- THERE YE GO, HANK!
WUNDERBAR! WE'RE BACK ON-LINE!
BUT, METHINKS, THE TELL-TALE HUSH ACROSS THE BOARD DECLARES, THROUGH INCESSANT STATIC CRACKLE--
--THAT WE MAY BE THE ONLY ONES ANYWHERE WHO HAVE REGAINED ELECTRONIC CAPABILITIES!
I'M AFRAID YE MAY BE RIGHT, BOYO.
THIS IS REALLY BAD.
sigh
LET'S BE ON WITH IT... WE'D BEST TELL CHARLES...


Join
FABIAN NICIEZA WRITER / ANDY KUBERT PENCILER / MATT RYAN INKER / BILL OAKLEY LETTERER / JOE ROSAS COLORIST / BOB HARRAS EDITOR / TOM DeFALCO EDITOR IN CHIEF
In proudly presenting the 25th ISSUE OF X-MEN!
DREAMS FADE
I HAVE CALLED YOU ALL HERE BECAUSE THERE IS SOMETHING I MUST TELL YOU.
...AS HE FACES HIS STUDENTS--NEW AND OLD--FROM HIS SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS.
AMONG ONE OLD FRIEND, STAND FOURTEEN MUTANTS, BORN WITH FANTASTIC POWERS THAT SET THEM APART FROM THE REST OF HUMANITY.
IT BEGINS... WITH AN ENDING--AND PERHAPS--THE BREAKING OF A MAN'S HEART. THIS MAN'S HEART.
THEY ARE THE X-MEN. AND ONCE AGAIN, THEY MUST SAVE A WORLD WHICH FEARS AND SHUNS THEM...
THE HEART OF CHARLES XAVIER...
Dedicated to Stan & Jack, Roy & Neal, Len & Dave, Chris & John--to all those who have come before us and all those who will come in the NEXT 30 years!


OBVIOUSLY, MY X-MEN, WE HAVE A PROBLEM.
SCOTT WILL BRIEF YOU ALL.
THANK YOU, PROFESSOR.
OKAY, GUYS, HERE GOES-- AT TEN-THIRTY-THREE THIS MORNING-- EASTERN STANDARD TIME--
--THE UNITED STATES SECURITY COUNCIL VOTED TO INITIATE THE PRELIMINARY LEVELS OF DEFENSE IN THE MAGNETO PROTOCOLS.
THE ALPHA AND BETA OPTIONS OF THE PROTOCOLS INVOLVE THE ACTIVATING OF A DEFENSIVE SHIELD WHICH SPREADS ACROSS THE PLANET--
--AND PREVENTS MAGNETO FROM USING HIS POWERS WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE.
THIS IS INTENDED TO PROTECT HUMANITY WITHOUT THE APPEARANCE OF INTENDED PROVOCATION.
WORKED LIKE A CHARM, eh, CYCLOPS?
AT ELEVEN FIFTY-FIVE P.M., AN ELECTROMAGNETIC EXPLOSION SENT A PULSE WAVE ACROSS THE PLANET.
IN RETALIATING, MAGNETO HAS EFFECTIVELY RENDERED THE MECHANICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCES OF THIS ENTIRE PLANET COMPLETELY USELESS.
WE BELIEVE THIS IS A TEMPORARY CONDITION, BUT EVEN SO, OUR SCATTERED INFORMATION LEADS US TO EXPECT--
--THAT THE PULSE WAVE WAS TERRIFYINGLY DEVASTATING IN ITS FEROCITY.
SCOTT--
HOW-- HOW BAD WAS IT?

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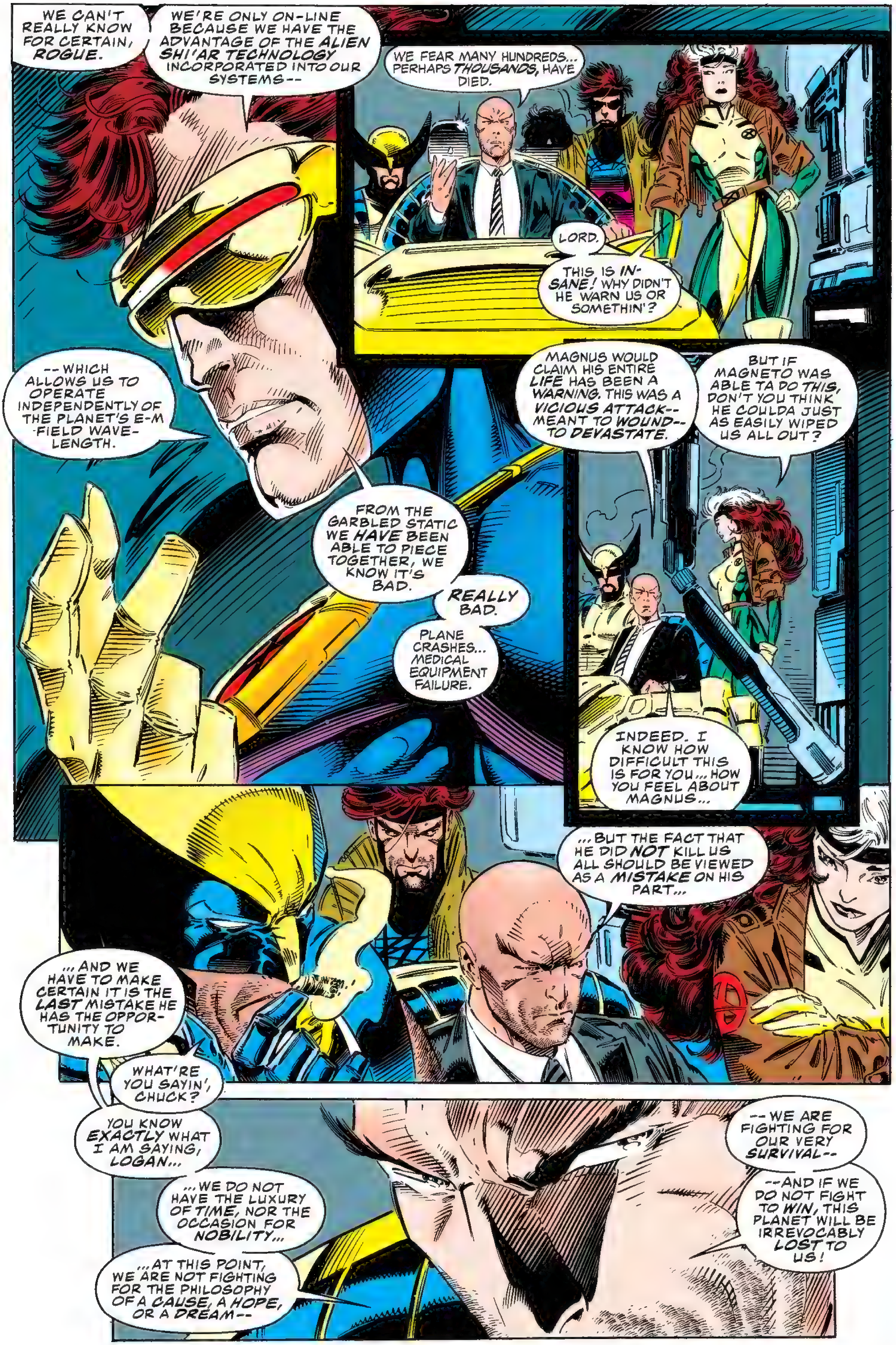
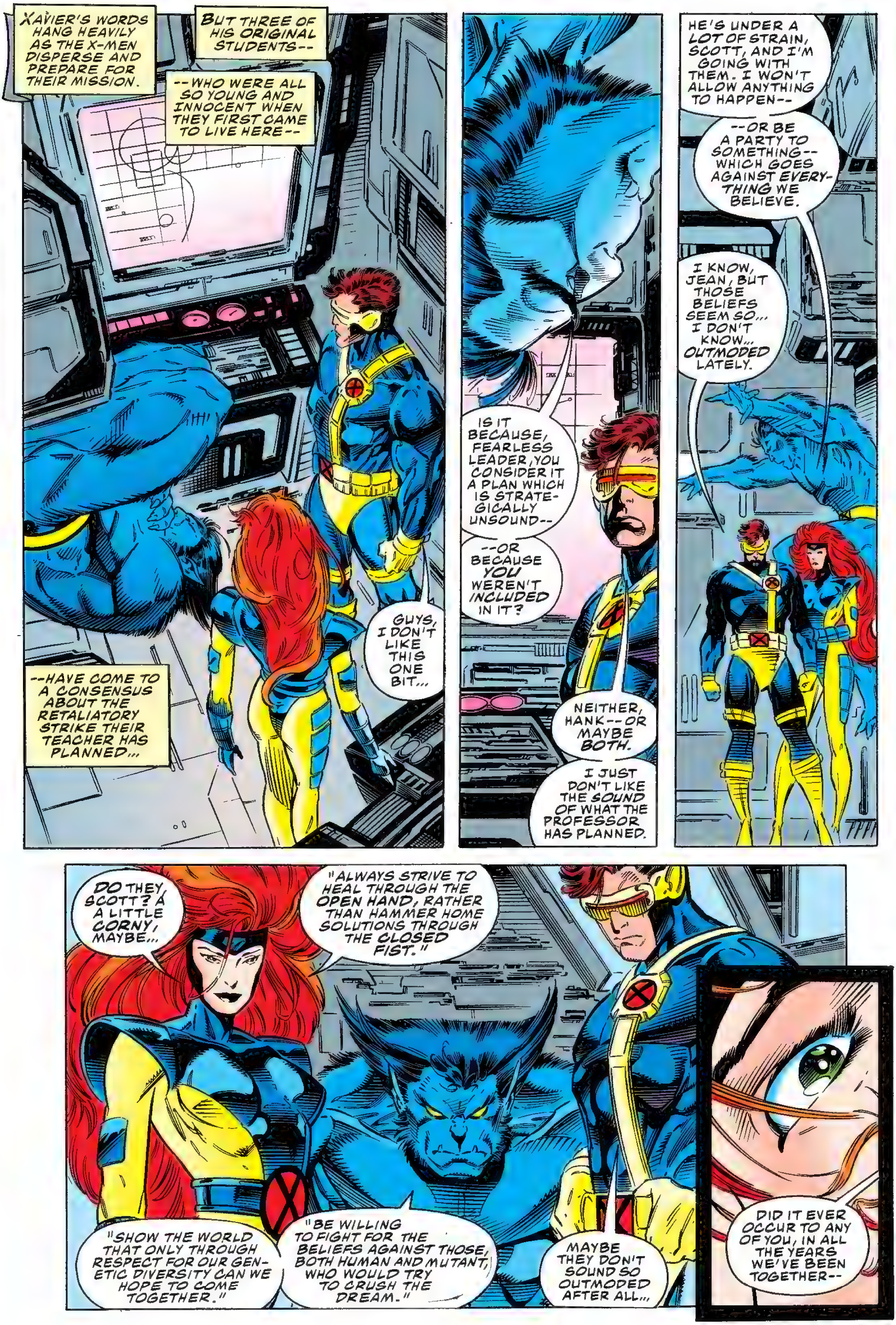
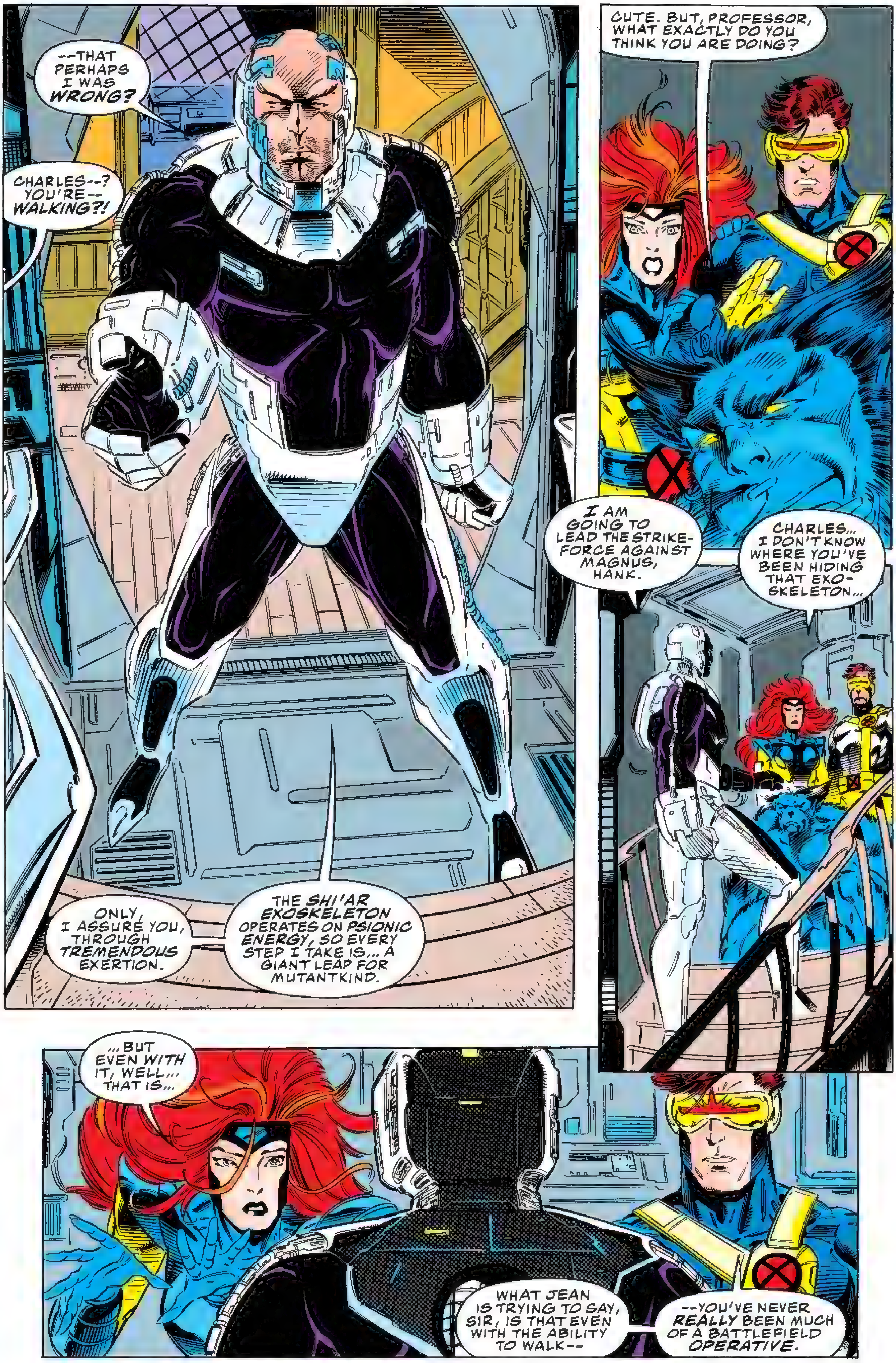
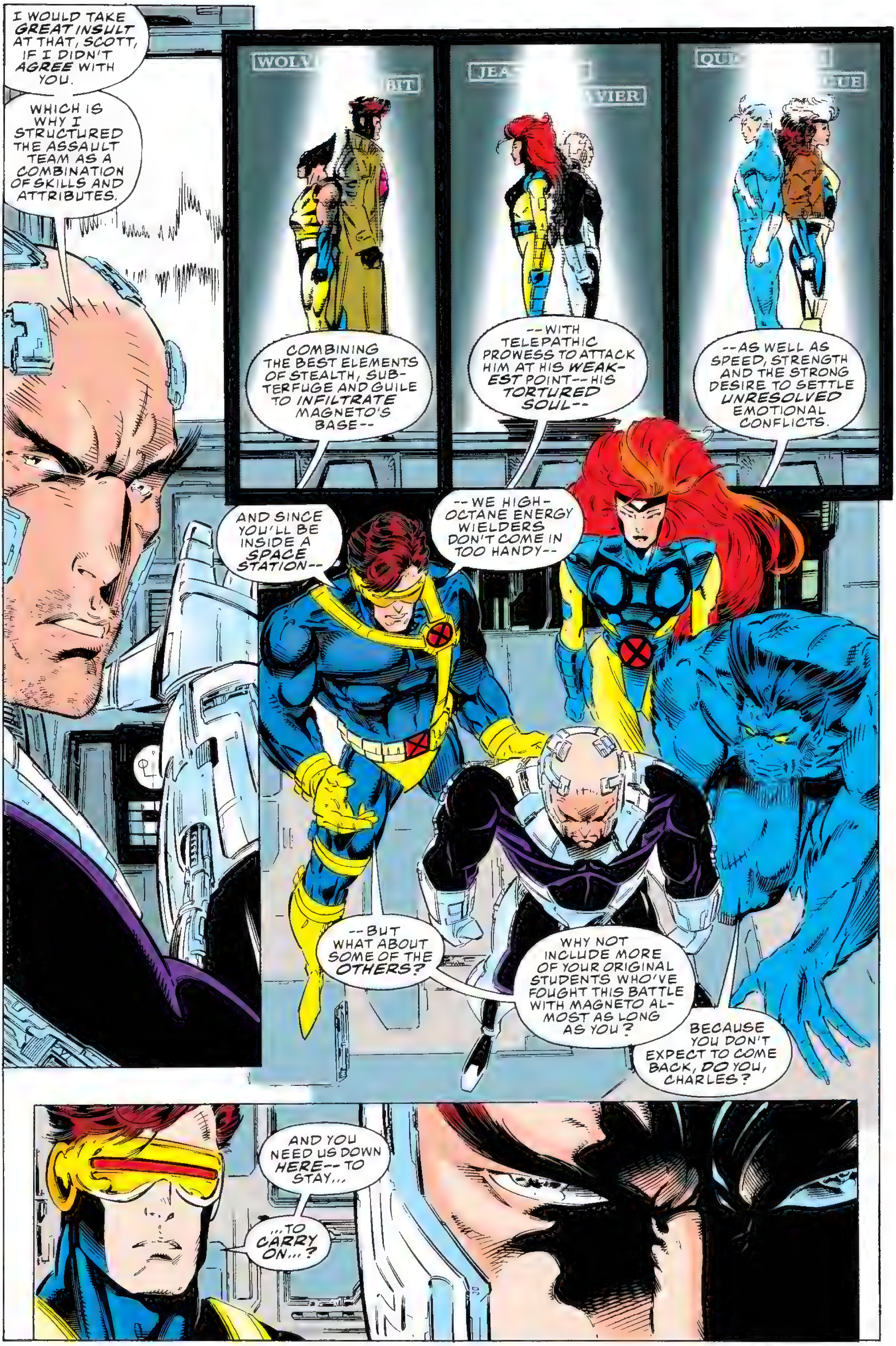
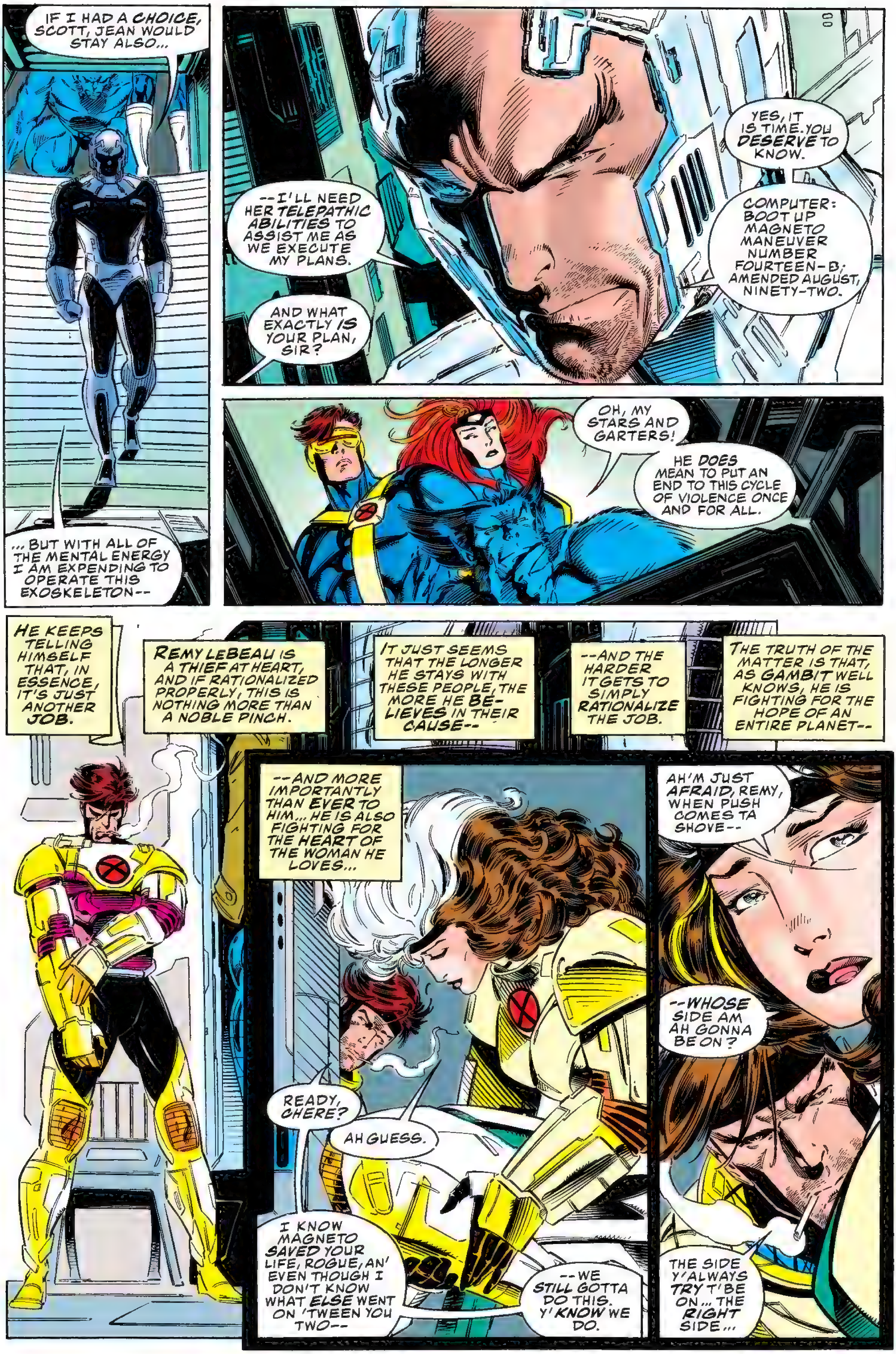
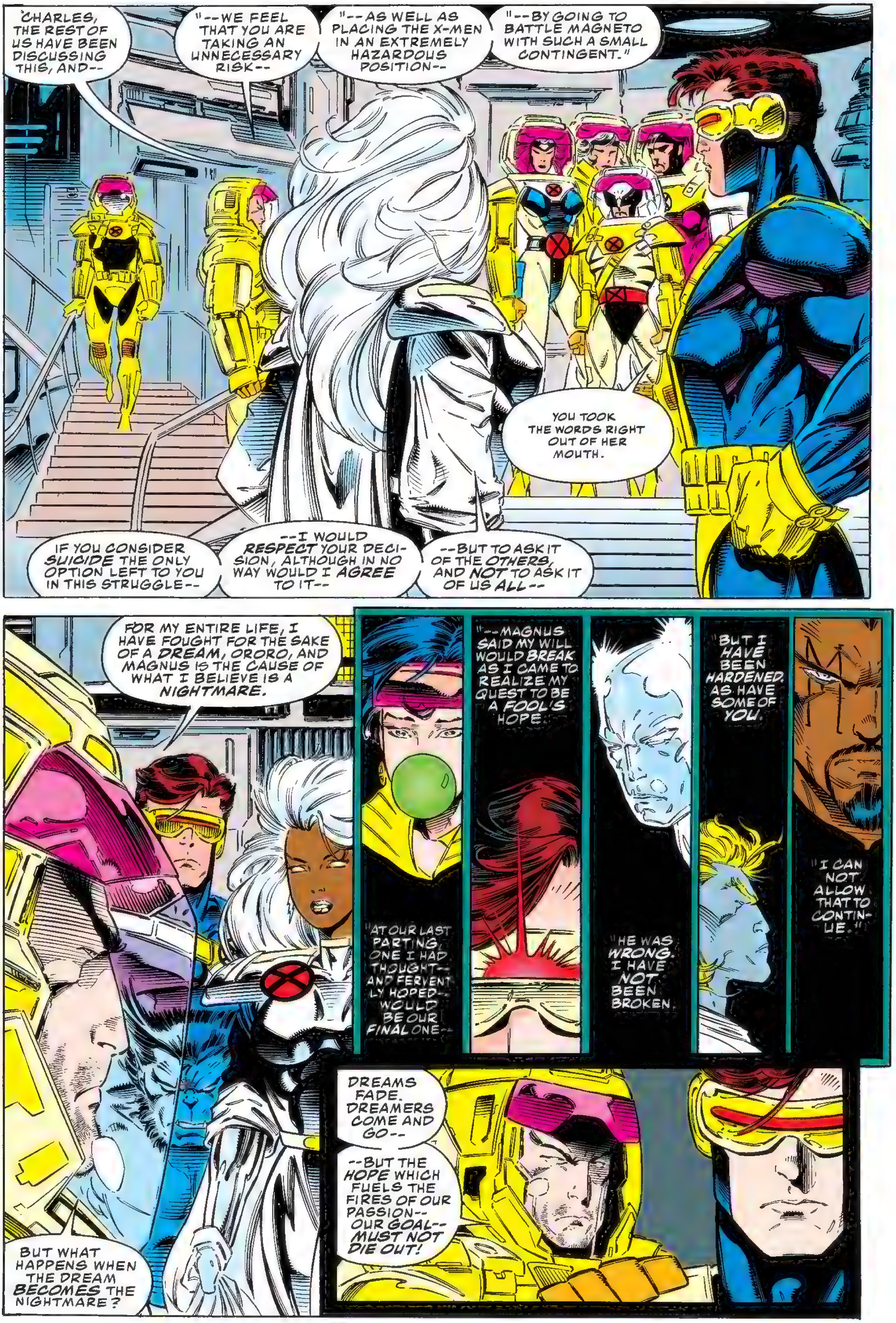

WE CAN'T REALLY KNOW FOR CERTAIN, ROGUE.
WE'RE ONLY ON-LINE BECAUSE WE HAVE THE ADVANTAGE OF THE ALIEN SHI'AR TECHNOLOGY INCORPORATED INTO OUR SYSTEMS--
WE FEAR MANY HUNDREDS... PERHAPS THOUSANDS, HAVE DIED.
LORD.
THIS IS IN-SANE! WHY DIDN'T HE WARN US OR SOMETHIN'?
--WHICH ALLOWS US TO OPERATE INDEPENDENTLY OF THE PLANET'S E-M FIELD WAVELENGTH.
FROM THE GARBLED STATIC WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO PIECE TOGETHER, WE KNOW IT'S BAD.
REALLY BAD.
PLANE CRASHES... MEDICAL EQUIPMENT FAILURE.
MAGNUS WOULD CLAIM HIS ENTIRE LIFE HAS BEEN A WARNING. THIS WAS A VICIOUS ATTACK-- MEANT TO WOUND-- TO DEVASTATE.
BUT IF MAGNETO WAS ABLE TA DO THIS, DON'T YOU THINK HE COULDA JUST AS EASILY WIPED US ALL OUT?
INDEED. I KNOW HOW DIFFICULT THIS IS FOR YOU... HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT MAGNUS...
...BUT THE FACT THAT HE DID NOT KILL US ALL SHOULD BE VIEWED AS A MISTAKE ON HIS PART...
...AND WE HAVE TO MAKE CERTAIN IT IS THE LAST MISTAKE HE HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE.
WHAT'RE YOU SAYIN', CHUCK?
YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHAT I AM SAYING, LOGAN...
...WE DO NOT HAVE THE LUXURY OF TIME, NOR THE OCCASION FOR NOBILITY...
...AT THIS POINT, WE ARE NOT FIGHTING FOR THE PHILOSOPHY OF A CAUSE, A HOPE, OR A DREAM--
--WE ARE FIGHTING FOR OUR VERY SURVIVAL--
--AND IF WE DO NOT FIGHT TO WIN, THIS PLANET WILL BE IRREVOCABLY LOST TO US!

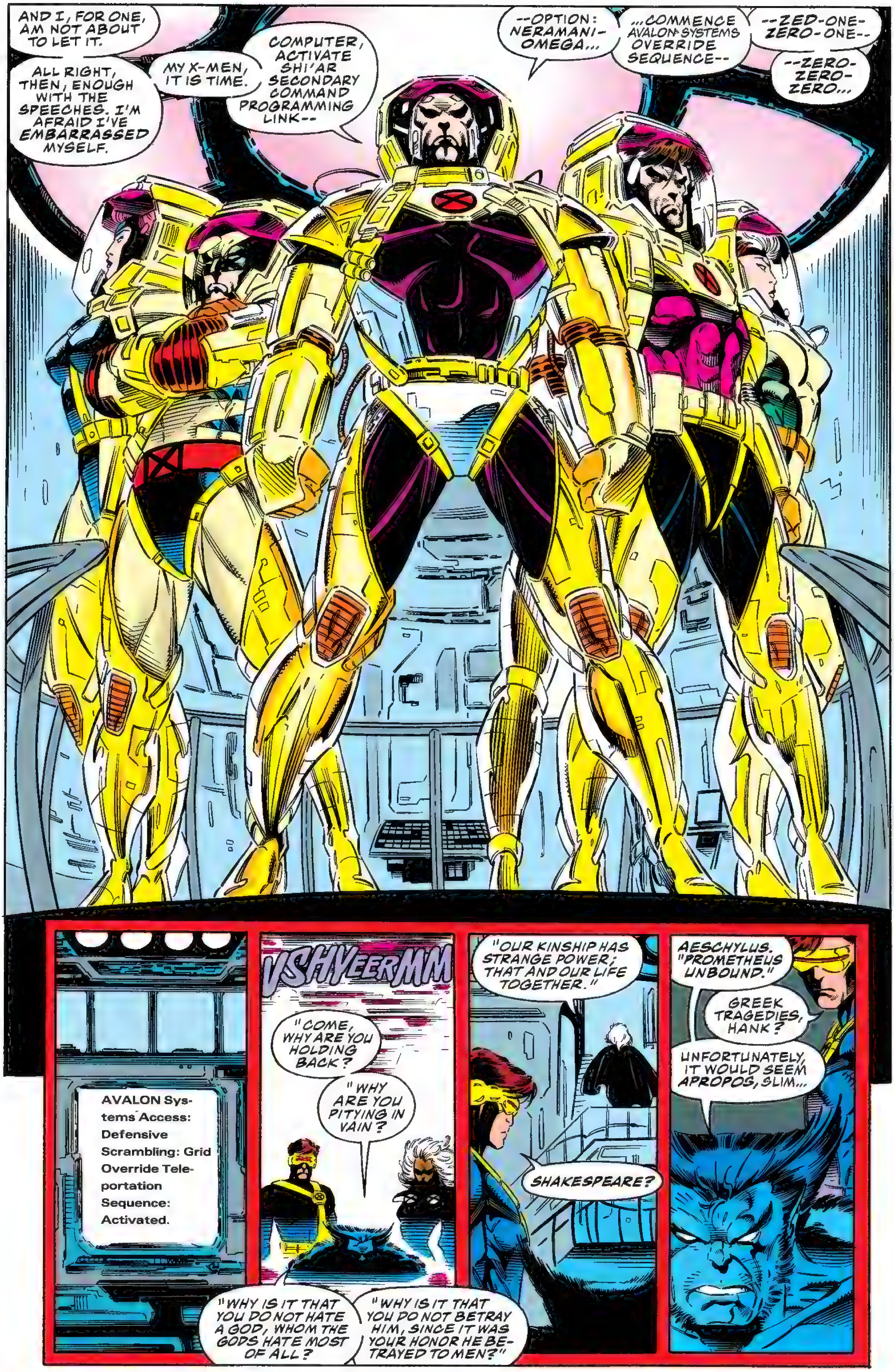

XAVIER'S WORDS HANG HEAVILY AS THE X-MEN DISPERSE AND PREPARE FOR THEIR MISSION.
BUT THREE OF HIS ORIGINAL STUDENTS--
--WHO WERE ALL SO YOUNG AND INNOCENT WHEN THEY FIRST CAME TO LIVE HERE--
--HAVE COME TO A CONSENSUS ABOUT THE RETALIATORY STRIKE THEIR TEACHER HAS PLANNED...
GUYS, I DON'T LIKE THIS ONE BIT...
IS IT BECAUSE, FEARLESS LEADER, YOU CONSIDER IT A PLAN WHICH IS STRATEGICALLY UNSOUND--
--OR BECAUSE YOU WEREN'T INCLUDED IN IT?
NEITHER, HANK--OR MAYBE BOTH.
I JUST DON'T LIKE THE SOUND OF WHAT THE PROFESSOR HAS PLANNED.
HE'S UNDER A LOT OF STRAIN, SCOTT, AND I'M GOING WITH THEM. I WON'T ALLOW ANYTHING TO HAPPEN--
--OR BE A PARTY TO SOMETHING--WHICH GOES AGAINST EVERYTHING WE BELIEVE.
I KNOW, JEAN, BUT THOSE BELIEFS SEEM SO... I DON'T KNOW... OUTMODED LATELY.
DO THEY, SCOTT? A LITTLE CORNY, MAYBE...
"ALWAYS STRIVE TO HEAL THROUGH THE OPEN HAND, RATHER THAN HAMMER HOME SOLUTIONS THROUGH THE CLOSED FIST."
"SHOW THE WORLD THAT ONLY THROUGH RESPECT FOR OUR GENETIC DIVERSITY CAN WE HOPE TO COME TOGETHER."
"BE WILLING TO FIGHT FOR THE BELIEFS AGAINST THOSE, BOTH HUMAN AND MUTANT, WHO WOULD TRY TO CRUSH THE DREAM."
MAYBE THEY DON'T SOUND SO OUTMODED AFTER ALL...
DID IT EVER OCCUR TO ANY OF YOU, IN ALL THE YEARS WE'VE BEEN TOGETHER--

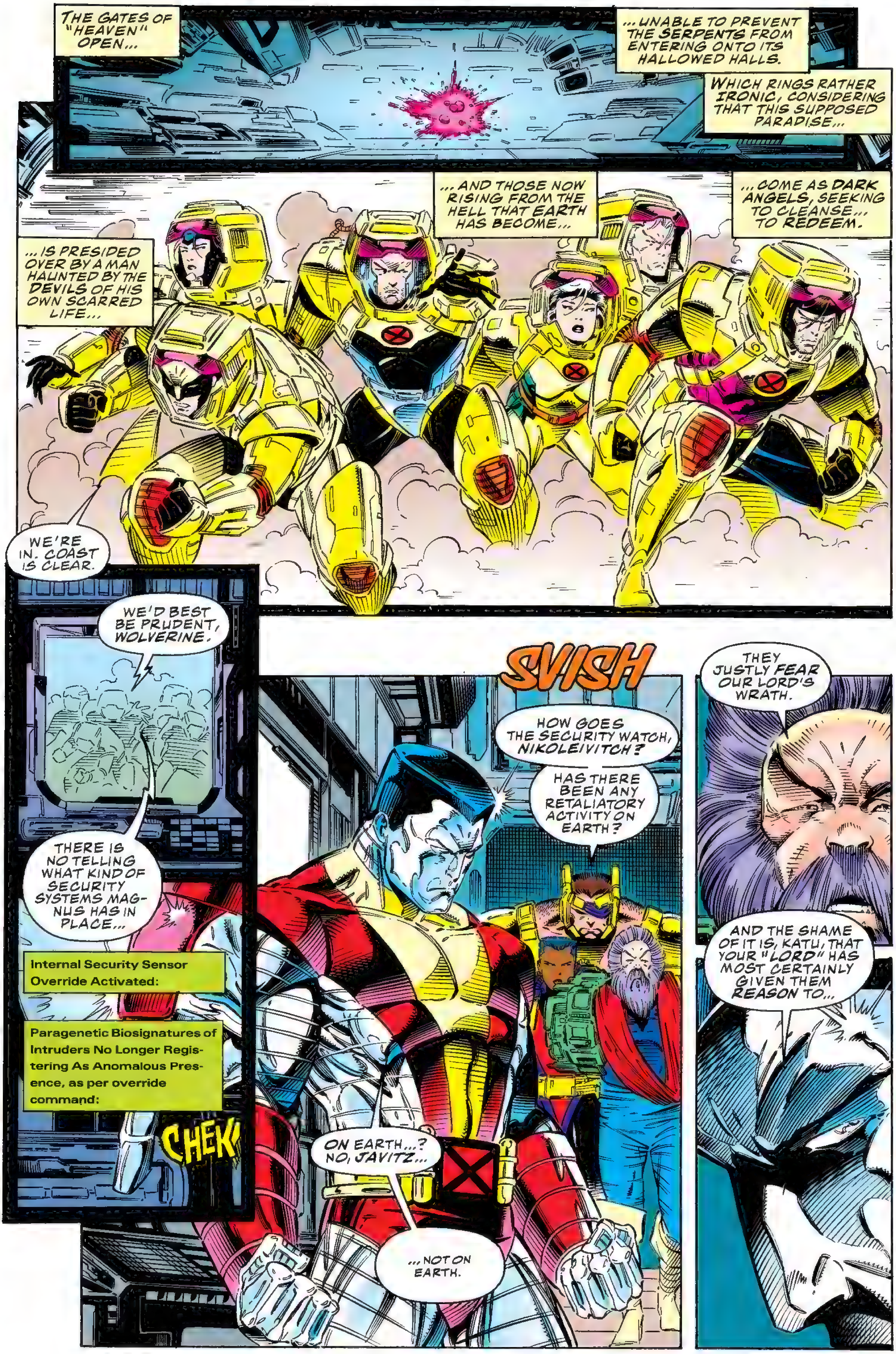

--THAT PERHAPS I WAS *WRONG?*
CHARLES--? YOU'RE-- *WALKING?!*
ONLY, I ASSURE YOU, THROUGH *TREMENDOUS* EXERTION.
THE *SHI'AR EXOSKELETON* OPERATES ON *PSIONIC ENERGY*, SO EVERY STEP I TAKE IS... A GIANT LEAP FOR MUTANTKIND.
CUTE. BUT, PROFESSOR, WHAT EXACTLY DO YOU THINK YOU ARE DOING?
I AM GOING TO LEAD THE STRIKE-FORCE AGAINST MAGNUS, HANK.
CHARLES... I DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU'VE BEEN HIDING THAT EXO-SKELETON...
...BUT EVEN *WITH* IT, WELL... THAT IS...
WHAT JEAN IS TRYING TO SAY, SIR, IS THAT EVEN WITH THE ABILITY TO WALK--
--YOU'VE NEVER *REALLY* BEEN MUCH OF A BATTLEFIELD *OPERATIVE*.


I WOULD TAKE GREAT INSULT AT THAT, SCOTT, IF I DIDN'T AGREE WITH YOU.
WHICH IS WHY I STRUCTURED THE ASSAULT TEAM AS A COMBINATION OF SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES.
WOLV
BIT
JEA
VIER
QU
UE
COMBINING THE BEST ELEMENTS OF STEALTH, SUBTERFUGE AND GUILE TO INFILTRATE MAGNETO'S BASE--
--WITH TELEPATHIC PROWESS TO ATTACK HIM AT HIS WEAKEST POINT--HIS TORTURED SOUL--
--AS WELL AS SPEED, STRENGTH AND THE STRONG DESIRE TO SETTLE UNRESOLVED EMOTIONAL CONFLICTS.
AND SINCE YOU'LL BE INSIDE A SPACE STATION--
--WE HIGH-OCTANE ENERGY WIELDERS DON'T COME IN TOO HANDY--
--BUT WHAT ABOUT SOME OF THE OTHERS?
WHY NOT INCLUDE MORE OF YOUR ORIGINAL STUDENTS WHO'VE FOUGHT THIS BATTLE WITH MAGNETO ALMOST AS LONG AS YOU?
BECAUSE YOU DON'T EXPECT TO COME BACK, DO YOU, CHARLES?
AND YOU NEED US DOWN HERE-- TO STAY...
...TO CARRY ON...?


IF I HAD A CHOICE, SCOTT, JEAN WOULD STAY ALSO...
...BUT WITH ALL OF THE MENTAL ENERGY I AM EXPENDING TO OPERATE THIS EXOSKELETON--
--I'LL NEED HER TELEPATHIC ABILITIES TO ASSIST ME AS WE EXECUTE MY PLANS.
AND WHAT EXACTLY IS YOUR PLAN, SIR?
YES, IT IS TIME. YOU DESERVE TO KNOW.
COMPUTER: BOOT UP MAGNETO MANEUVER NUMBER FOURTEEN-B, AMENDED AUGUST, NINETY-TWO.
OH, MY STARS AND GARTERS!
HE DOES MEAN TO PUT AN END TO THIS CYCLE OF VIOLENCE ONCE AND FOR ALL.
HE KEEPS TELLING HIMSELF THAT, IN ESSENCE, IT'S JUST ANOTHER JOB.
REMY LEBEAU IS A THIEF AT HEART, AND IF RATIONALIZED PROPERLY, THIS IS NOTHING MORE THAN A NOBLE PINCH.
IT JUST SEEMS THAT THE LONGER HE STAYS WITH THESE PEOPLE, THE MORE HE BELIEVES IN THEIR CAUSE--
--AND THE HARDER IT GETS TO SIMPLY RATIONALIZE THE JOB.
THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER IS THAT, AS GAMBIT WELL KNOWS, HE IS FIGHTING FOR THE HOPE OF AN ENTIRE PLANET--
--AND MORE IMPORTANTLY THAN EVER TO HIM... HE IS ALSO FIGHTING FOR THE HEART OF THE WOMAN HE LOVES...
READY, CHERE?
AH GUESS.
I KNOW MAGNETO SAVED YOUR LIFE, ROGUE, AN' EVEN THOUGH I DON'T KNOW WHAT ELSE WENT ON 'TWEEN YOU TWO--
--WE STILL GOTTA DO THIS. Y' KNOW WE DO.
AH'M JUST AFRAID, REMY, WHEN PUSH COMES TA SHOVE--
--WHOSE SIDE AM AH GONNA BE ON?
THE SIDE Y'ALWAYS TRY T'BE ON... THE RIGHT SIDE...

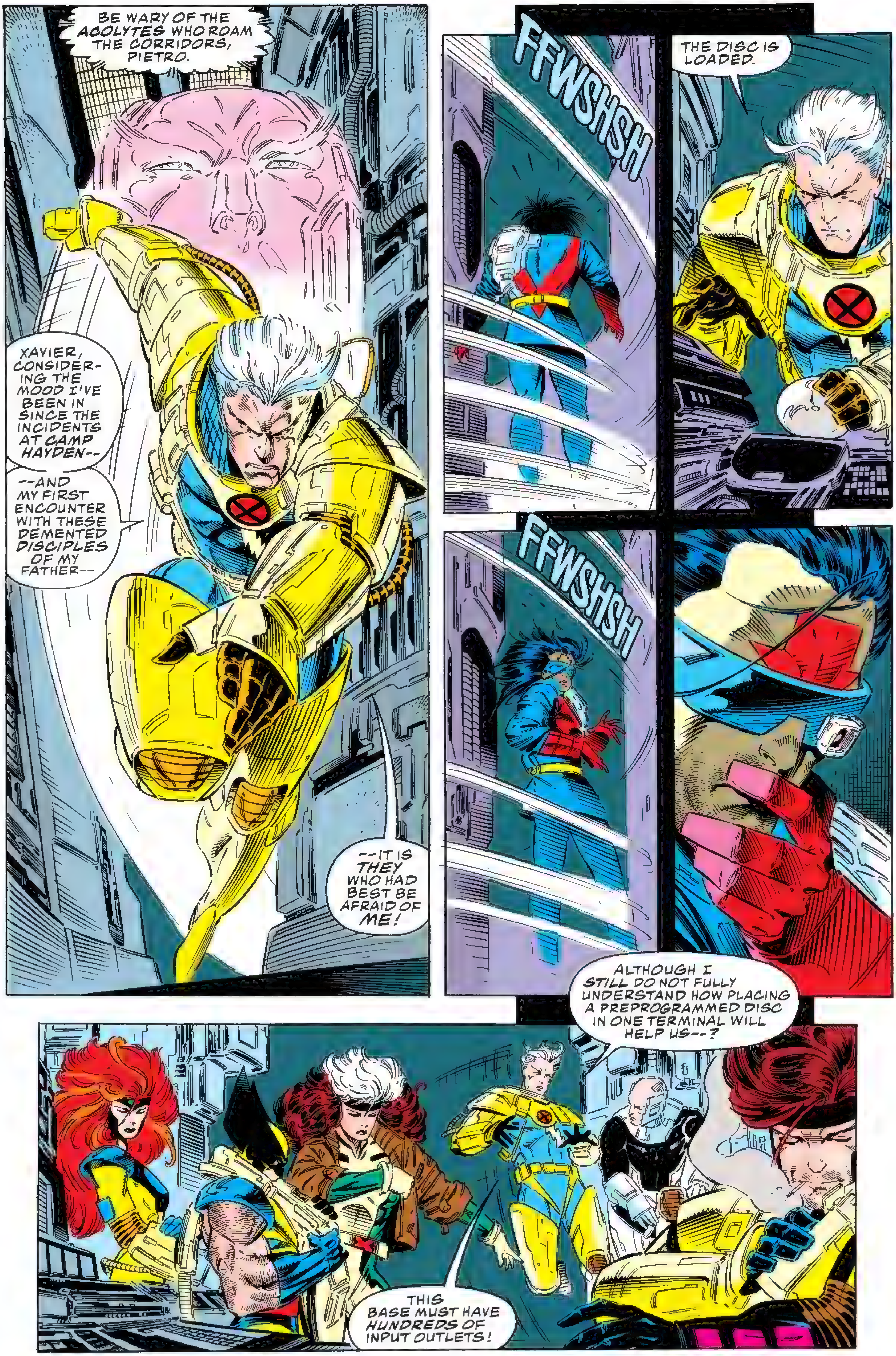

"CHARLES, THE REST OF US HAVE BEEN DISCUSSING THIS, AND--
"--WE FEEL THAT YOU ARE TAKING AN UNNECESSARY RISK--
"--AS WELL AS PLACING THE X-MEN IN AN EXTREMELY HAZARDOUS POSITION--
"--BY GOING TO BATTLE MAGNETO WITH SUCH A SMALL CONTINGENT."
YOU TOOK THE WORDS RIGHT OUT OF HER MOUTH.
IF YOU CONSIDER *SUICIDE* THE ONLY OPTION LEFT TO YOU IN THIS STRUGGLE--
--I WOULD *RESPECT* YOUR DECISION, ALTHOUGH IN NO WAY WOULD I *AGREE* TO IT--
--BUT TO ASK IT OF THE *OTHERS*, AND *NOT* TO ASK IT OF US *ALL*--
FOR MY ENTIRE LIFE, I HAVE FOUGHT FOR THE SAKE OF A *DREAM*, ORORO, AND MAGNUS IS THE CAUSE OF WHAT I BELIEVE IS A *NIGHTMARE*.
"AT OUR LAST PARTING, ONE I HAD THOUGHT--AND FERVENTLY HOPED--WOULD BE OUR *FINAL* ONE--
"--MAGNUS SAID MY WILL WOULD *BREAK* AS I CAME TO REALIZE MY QUEST TO BE A *FOOL'S* HOPE.
"HE WAS *WRONG*. I HAVE *NOT* BEEN BROKEN.
"BUT I *HAVE* BEEN *HARDENED*, AS HAVE SOME OF *YOU*.
"I CAN NOT ALLOW THAT TO CONTINUE."
BUT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE DREAM *BECOMES* THE NIGHTMARE?
DREAMS FADE. DREAMERS COME AND GO--
--BUT THE *HOPE* WHICH FUELS THE FIRES OF OUR PASSION--OUR *GOAL*--*MUST NOT DIE OUT!*

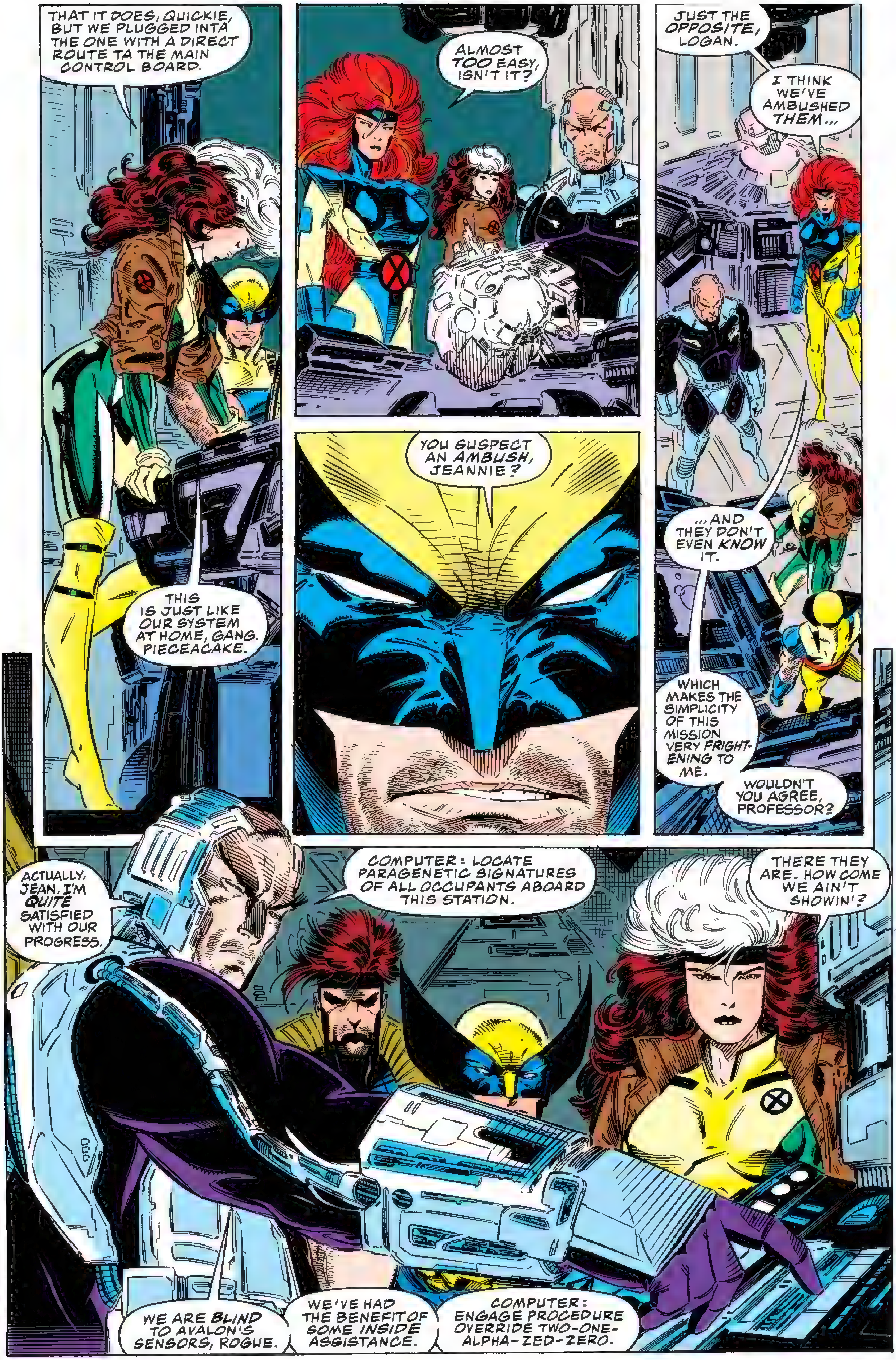

AND I, FOR ONE, AM NOT ABOUT TO LET IT.
ALL RIGHT, THEN, ENOUGH WITH THE SPEECHES. I'M AFRAID I'VE *EMBARRASSED* MYSELF.
MY X-MEN, IT IS TIME.
COMPUTER, ACTIVATE SHI'AR SECONDARY COMMAND PROGRAMMING LINK--
--OPTION: NERAMANI-OMEGA...
...COMMENCE AVALON SYSTEMS OVERRIDE SEQUENCE--
--ZED-ONE-ZERO-ONE--
--ZERO-ZERO-ZERO...
AVALON Systems Access: Defensive Scrambling: Grid Override Teleportation Sequence: Activated.
VSHVEERMM
"COME, WHY ARE YOU HOLDING BACK?
"WHY ARE YOU PITYING IN VAIN?
"WHY IS IT THAT YOU DO NOT HATE A GOD, WHOM THE GODS HATE MOST OF ALL?
"WHY IS IT THAT YOU DO NOT BETRAY HIM, SINCE IT WAS YOUR HONOR HE BETRAYED TO MEN?"
"OUR KINSHIP HAS STRANGE POWER; THAT AND OUR LIFE TOGETHER."
SHAKESPEARE?
AESCHYLUS. "PROMETHEUS UNBOUND."
GREEK TRAGEDIES, HANK?
UNFORTUNATELY, IT WOULD SEEM APROPOS, SLIM...


THE GATES OF "HEAVEN" OPEN...
...UNABLE TO PREVENT THE SERPENTS FROM ENTERING ONTO ITS HALLOWED HALLS.
WHICH RINGS RATHER IRONIC, CONSIDERING THAT THIS SUPPOSED PARADISE...
...IS PRESIDED OVER BY A MAN HAUNTED BY THE DEVILS OF HIS OWN SCARRED LIFE...
...AND THOSE NOW RISING FROM THE HELL THAT EARTH HAS BECOME...
...COME AS DARK ANGELS, SEEKING TO CLEANSE... TO REDEEM.
WE'RE IN. COAST IS CLEAR.
WE'D BEST BE PRUDENT, WOLVERINE.
THERE IS NO TELLING WHAT KIND OF SECURITY SYSTEMS MAGNUS HAS IN PLACE...
Internal Security Sensor Override Activated:
Paragenetic Biosignatures of Intruders No Longer Registering As Anomalous Presence, as per override command:
CHEK
SVISH
HOW GOES THE SECURITY WATCH, NIKOLEIVITCH?
HAS THERE BEEN ANY RETALIATORY ACTIVITY ON EARTH?
ON EARTH...? NO, JAVITZ...
...NOT ON EARTH.
THEY JUSTLY FEAR OUR LORD'S WRATH.
AND THE SHAME OF IT IS, KATU, THAT YOUR "LORD" HAS MOST CERTAINLY GIVEN THEM REASON TO...

SO MUCH OF THIS MATERIAL IS SHI'AR IN ORIGIN--
--STOLEN FROM US, NO DOUBT, WHILE I ENTRUSTED MAGNUS AS HEADMASTER OF MY SCHOOL!
MY FATHER HAS ALWAYS DONE A VERY GOOD JOB OF USING THE HARD WORK OF OTHERS AGAINST THEM, XAVIER.
BUT WHAT HAS HE EVER GIVEN ANYONE WHICH HAS SPRUNG FROM HIS OWN CREATIVITY?
OTHER THAN THE COLD, BITTER TASTE OF HIS POWER AND THE BLEAK OUTLOOK OF HIS VISION?
Y'KNOW, IF WE SURVIVE THIS--
--I'M GON' TEACH ALL'A YOU--
--HOW TO BECOME BETTER, QUIETER THIEVES...
...IF IT'S THE LAST THING I DO!
THEN 'GAIN, LOOK WHO'S CALLIN' THE KETTLE BLACK...
WHO'S THERE--?!
UHM... AVON CALLIN'...
...HOW 'BOUT SOME MAKE-UP T'COVER UP THAT BLACK EYE?
WHAT BLACK EYE?
FWRRSHSH

THE ONE Y'GONNA HAVE FOR *SURE* IF YOU DON' GIVE UP RIGHT NOW, BOY.
EASY, GAMBIT. I *KNOW* THESE TWO. RUSTY COLLINS-- AND SKIDS.
THAT SO, JEAN? HOW DO WE KNOW THEY AIN'T BEEN *FREED* FROM ONE *BRAINWASHIN'*--
CANNONBALL TOLD US THEY'D AGREED TO STAY UP HERE AFTER THEY WERE FREED FROM STRYFE'S MIND CONTROL.
--JUST TO HAVE MAGNETO PLAY GAMES WITH THEIR HEADS ALL OVER AGAIN?
WE'RE HERE BY *CHOICE*, WOLVERINE!
FOR THE *FIRST* TIME SINCE WE MET ALL OF YOU--
--WE FEEL WE CAN *ACHIEVE* THE DREAM YOU X-MEN KEEP PREACHING ABOUT!
RUSTY... *HOW?* BY *SEPARATING* YOURSELVES FROM THE VERY PEOPLE WHO HAVE TO LEARN TO ACCEPT US BEFORE PEACE WILL EVER OCCUR?
I'M SORRY, CHILDREN--
--BUT WE SIMPLY DO *NOT* HAVE THE TIME--
--TO DEBATE THE MATTER.
CHARLES --YOU *FORCED* THEM TO FALL ASLEEP?!
I SCANNED THEIR MINDS, JEAN. I COULD NOT DETERMINE IF THEY WERE ACTING OF THEIR OWN FREE WILL OR NOT.
SO YOU ACTED *FOR* THEM?
HOW UNLIKE WHAT MAGNETO OR STRYFE DID TO THEM...
PIETRO, YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO.
I WILL REMAIN IN *MENTAL CONTACT* WITH YOU AS YOU GO.


BE WARY OF THE *ACOLYTES* WHO ROAM THE CORRIDORS, PIETRO.
XAVIER, CONSIDERING THE MOOD I'VE BEEN IN SINCE THE INCIDENTS AT *CAMP HAYDEN*--
--AND MY FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THESE DEMENTED *DISCIPLES* OF MY FATHER--
--IT IS *THEY* WHO HAD BEST BE AFRAID OF *ME!*
FFWSHSH
THE DISC IS LOADED.
FFWSHSH
ALTHOUGH I *STILL* DO NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND HOW PLACING A PREPROGRAMMED DISC IN ONE TERMINAL WILL HELP US--?
THIS BASE MUST HAVE *HUNDREDS* OF INPUT OUTLETS!

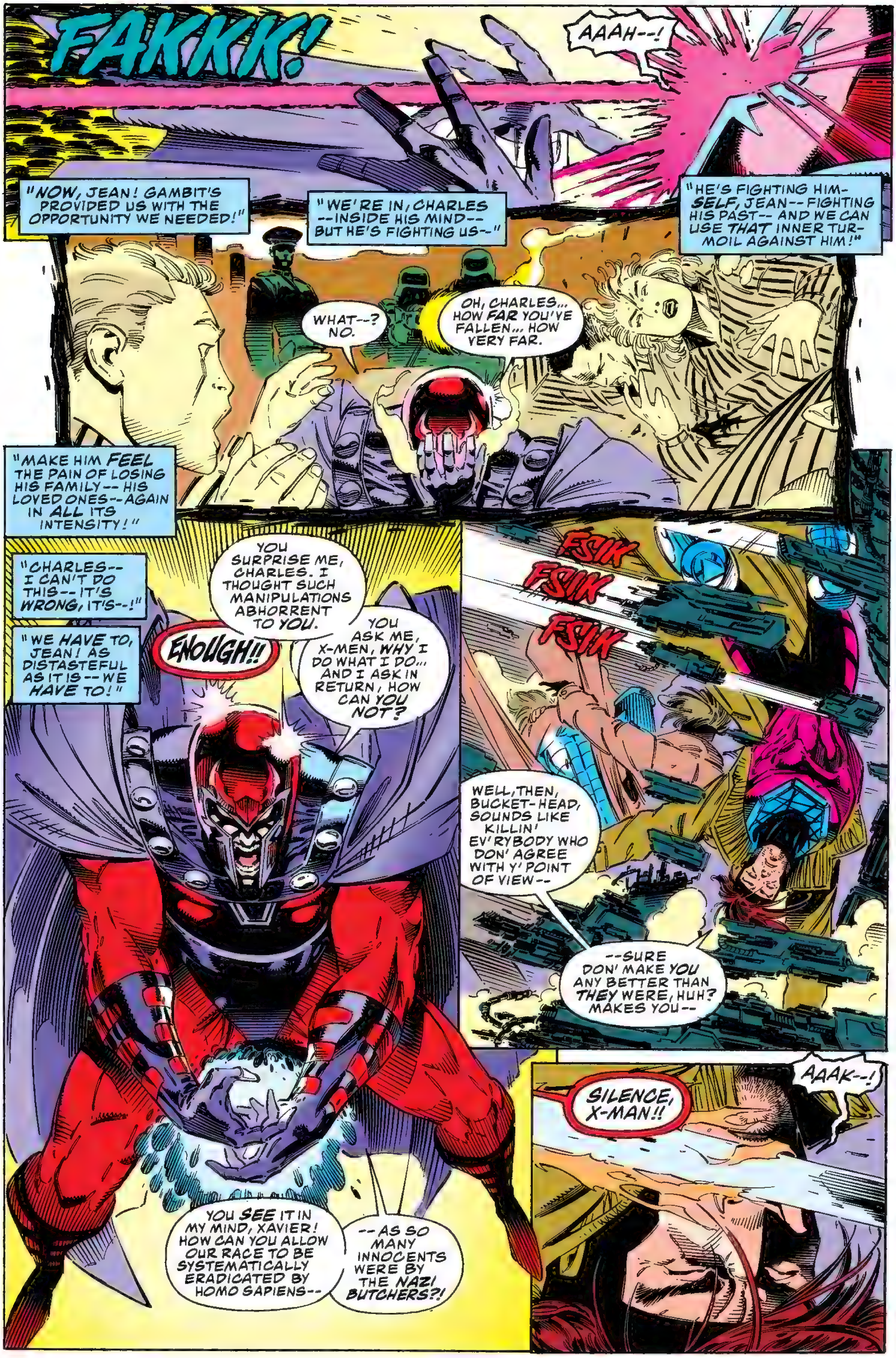

THAT IT DOES, QUICKIE, BUT WE PLUGGED INTA THE ONE WITH A DIRECT ROUTE TA THE MAIN CONTROL BOARD.
THIS IS JUST LIKE OUR SYSTEM AT HOME, GANG. PIECEACAKE.
ALMOST *TOO* EASY, ISN'T IT?
YOU SUSPECT AN *AMBUSH*, JEANNIE?
JUST THE *OPPOSITE*, LOGAN.
I THINK WE'VE AMBUSHED *THEM*...
...AND THEY DON'T EVEN *KNOW* IT.
WHICH MAKES THE SIMPLICITY OF THIS MISSION VERY FRIGHTENING TO *ME*.
WOULDN'T YOU AGREE, PROFESSOR?
ACTUALLY, JEAN, I'M *QUITE* SATISFIED WITH OUR PROGRESS.
COMPUTER: LOCATE PARAGENETIC SIGNATURES OF ALL OCCUPANTS ABOARD THIS STATION.
THERE THEY ARE. HOW COME WE AIN'T SHOWIN'?
WE ARE *BLIND* TO AVALON'S SENSORS, ROGUE.
WE'VE HAD THE BENEFIT OF SOME *INSIDE* ASSISTANCE.
COMPUTER: ENGAGE PROCEDURE OVERRIDE TWO-ONE-ALPHA-ZED-ZERO.

VSHHYEEERRRMMMMMMMM
eh--?
WHAT'S GOING ON--?!
OH--
--CRUD--!
VSHHYEEERRRMMMMMMM
MY LORD--?!
THE TELEPORTATION SYSTEMS HAVE BEEN ACTIVATED?
BY WHOM?
VSHHYEEERRRMMMMMM
Teleport transmission completed:.
SEAL AIR-LOCK HATCHES AND JETTISON AIR-LOCK PODS FOR STATIONARY ORBIT.
FIVE HUNDRED METER DISTANCE.
Acknowledged:.
PFFSSSTTT
WHAT
IS
GOING
ON--?
PSST
PFSSTT
PFSSSTTT
PFFSSSTT
PFSST

THAT ELIMINATES ANY MISCELLANEOUS OPPOSITION.
I BLAME NONE OF THEM FOR THIS, THOUGH.
FOR ALL WE KNOW, MAGNETO HAS--
FWATHAKROOM
HAS WHAT, CHARLES?
OFFERED THEM A BETTER OPTION THAN ANY YOU COULD EVER HOPE TO?
FOR THAT IS ALL I HAVE DONE!
I HAVE OFFERED THEM HOPE AND TRUTH, OPPORTUNITY AND ACCOMPLISHMENT!
AND I WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO FOR ALL MUTANTS WHOM I DEEM WORTHY--
--AND I WILL NOT LET YOUR X-MEN STOP ME AGAIN!!

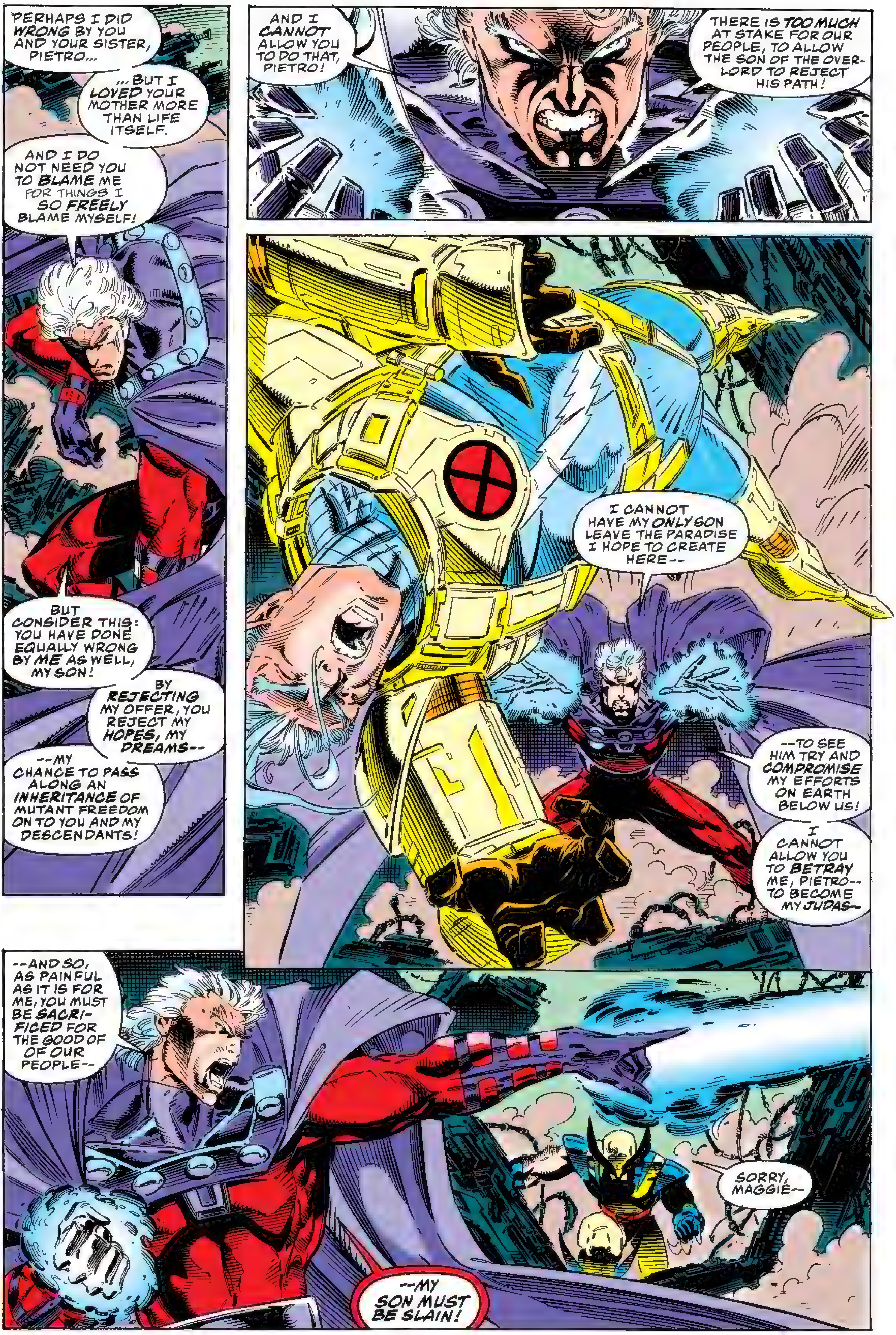
ouch
ouch
ouch
WELL, HERE GOES THE ONE THING WE DIDN'T WANT...
...A FULL-ON HEAD-TA-HEAD WITH THE BIG GUY!
THE PLAN WAS T'COME IN AN' NAIL HIM WHEN HE WASN'T READY! SO THE PLAN'S BEEN CHANGED A LITTLE, DARLIN'--
--ALL THAT MEANS IS WE IMPROVISE!
Ah, LOGAN... WE DANCE THE DANCE AGAIN AND AGAIN...
...AND YOU'VE NEVER LEARNED THE STEPS VERY WELL, HAVE YOU?
SHFWUM!
MAGNUS-- WAIT!
DON'T YOU SEE, THIS TIME, YOU'VE GONE TOO FAR?
PEOPLE'RE DEAD DOWN ON EARTH 'CAUSE A' YOU! YOU SWORE THAT WOULD NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN!
SKRITCH!
urk
I WAS MISTAKEN. THAT IS THE PRICE THEY MUST PAY, ROGUE.

PAY FOR WHAT? PAY SIMPLY FOR BEING HUMAN? SIMPLY FOR BEING ALIVE?
JEAN, DON'T WASTE YOUR ENERGIES IN SO FUTILE A MANNER!
LET THE OTHERS OCCUPY HIM--
--WE MUST CONCENTRATE, AS WE DISCUSSED--
--ON DEFEATING HIM FROM THE INSIDE. FROM WITHIN HIS MIND.
BUT THEY HAVE NO CHANCE WITHOUT US, PROFESSOR! WE--
THEIR ROLE IS TO PROVIDE THE CHANCE WE NEED, NOT THE OPPOSITE.
PSI-LINK WITH MY MIND, JEAN. I CANNOT BREAK THROUGH MAGNUS'S PSYCHIC DEFENSES ALONE. I NEED YOU--
--TO STRIKE AT HIS VERY CORE, WITH THE EXPECTATION THAT, AT THE ROOT OF HIS GOALS AND HIS OBSESSIONS--
--MAGNETO'S LIFE IS BUILT ON A FRAGILE SENSE OF FAILURE--
--THAT DEEP DOWN INSIDE, MAGNUS MUST KNOW THAT HIS WAY IS UTTERLY, UTTERLY WRONG!
BUT, PROFESSOR--THIS IS WRONG! IT GOES AGAINST EVERYTHING YOU EVER TAUGHT ME!
WONDERFUL, JEAN--WHAT D'YOU SUGGEST? WE SCOLD HIM AN' THAT'S THE END O' THAT?
FSHRAAKK

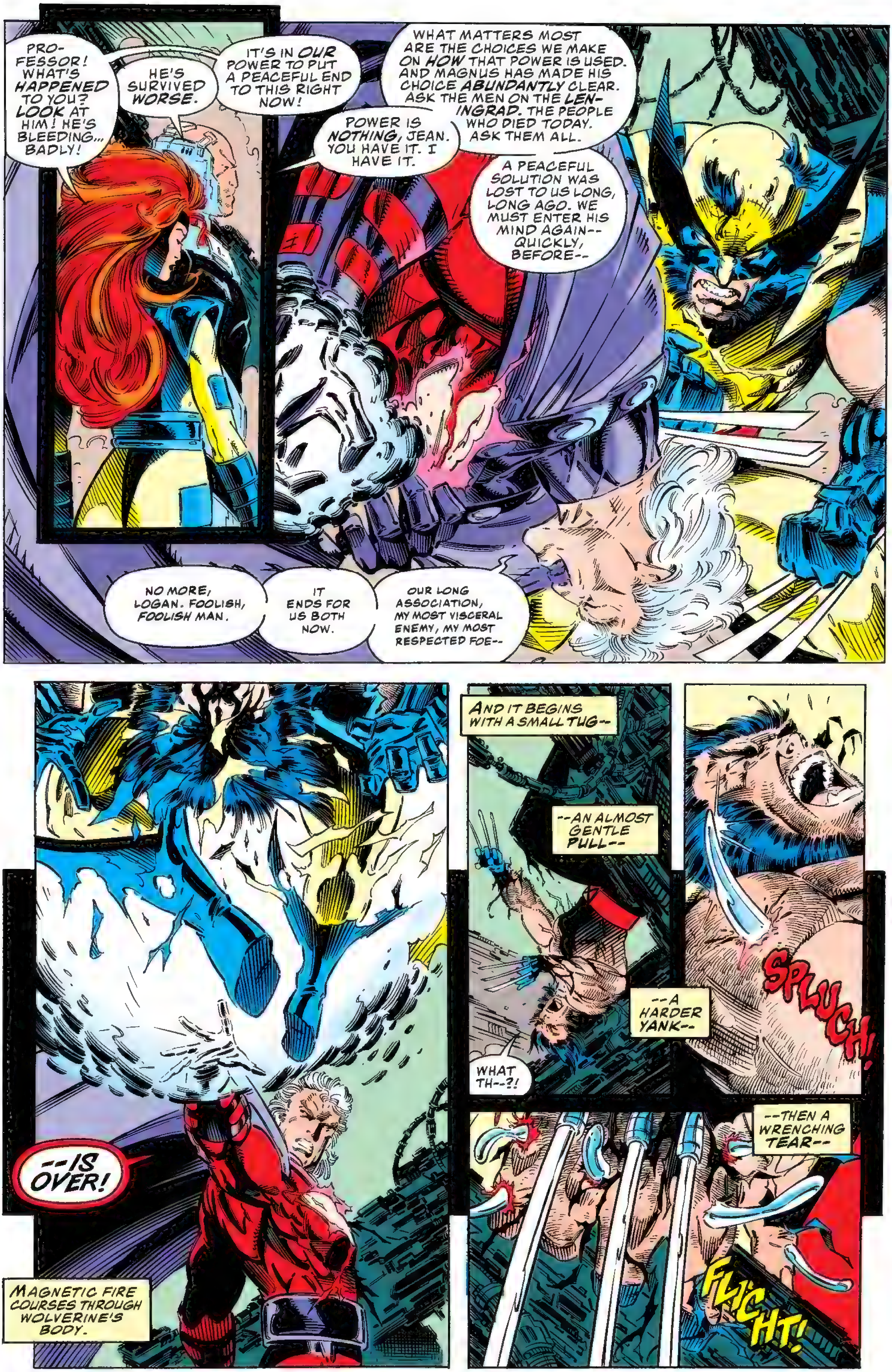

FAKKK!
AAAH--!
"NOW, JEAN! GAMBIT'S PROVIDED US WITH THE OPPORTUNITY WE NEEDED!"
"WE'RE IN, CHARLES --INSIDE HIS MIND-- BUT HE'S FIGHTING US--"
"HE'S FIGHTING HIMSELF, JEAN-- FIGHTING HIS PAST-- AND WE CAN USE THAT INNER TURMOIL AGAINST HIM!"
WHAT--? NO.
OH, CHARLES... HOW FAR YOU'VE FALLEN... HOW VERY FAR.
"MAKE HIM FEEL THE PAIN OF LOSING HIS FAMILY-- HIS LOVED ONES--AGAIN IN ALL ITS INTENSITY!"
"CHARLES-- I CAN'T DO THIS-- IT'S WRONG, IT'S--!"
"WE HAVE TO, JEAN! AS DISTASTEFUL AS IT IS--WE HAVE TO!"
YOU SURPRISE ME, CHARLES. I THOUGHT SUCH MANIPULATIONS ABHORRENT TO YOU.
ENOUGH!!
YOU ASK ME, X-MEN, WHY I DO WHAT I DO... AND I ASK IN RETURN, HOW CAN YOU NOT?
YOU SEE IT IN MY MIND, XAVIER! HOW CAN YOU ALLOW OUR RACE TO BE SYSTEMATICALLY ERADICATED BY HOMO SAPIENS--
--AS SO MANY INNOCENTS WERE BY THE NAZI BUTCHERS?!
FSSK
FSSK
FSSK
WELL, THEN, BUCKET-HEAD, SOUNDS LIKE KILLIN' EV'RYBODY WHO DON' AGREE WITH Y' POINT OF VIEW--
--SURE DON' MAKE YOU ANY BETTER THAN THEY WERE, HUH? MAKES YOU--
SILENCE, X-MAN!!
AAAK--!

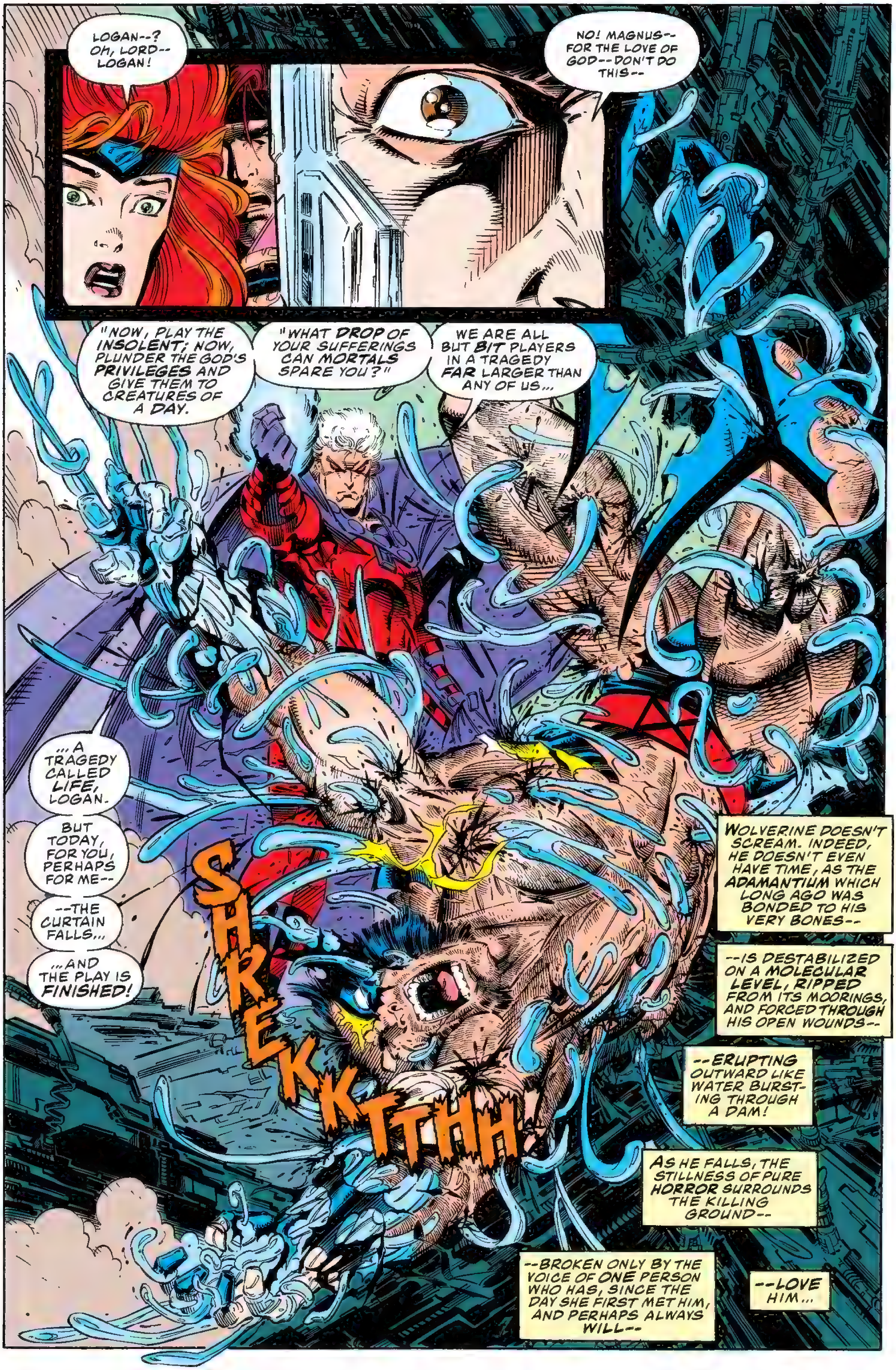
REMY--!!
YOU HURT HIM!
AN' BECAUSE YOU KNOW HE WAS RIGHT, MAGNUS! YOU JUST COULDN'T FACE IT, COULD YA?
SURE THERE'S BEEN A MIGHTY FINE LINE BETWEEN THE ROAD WE WALK AND YOURS--
--BUT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US, SUGAH, IS STILL SIMPLE AS RIGHT AN' WRONG--
AN' GOIN' T' WAR WITH HUMANS--
--KILLIN' 'EM--
--BECAUSE MAYBE THEY FEEL THE SAME WAY ABOUT YOU--
--DON' MAKE IT RIGHT!
AN' THAT'S A BELIEF WE'RE WILLIN' TA FIGHT--AN' DIE FOR!
"CHARLES, WHERE--?"
"AT THE GRAVESITE OF DOUG RAMSEY.
"THE YOUNG NEW MUTANT WHO DIED WHILE MAGNUS WAS HEADMASTER OF THE SCHOOL."
"IT HURT HIM DEEPLY, CHARLES.
"HIS FEELINGS ... HIS GRIEF... WERE GENUINE. IS THIS RIGHT? TO BRING THESE MEMORIES OUT? TO USE THEM IN THIS WAY...?"
--WHAT --CHARLES?! WHAT ARE YOU DOING--?
WHATEVER IT TAKES TO DEFEAT YOU, FATHER... AND END THIS MADNESS.
NNNRRRM--!
PIETRO! OUT OF ALL OF THEM--YOU--HAVE THE AUDACITY TO CONFRONT ME?!
OH, MY SON, MY SON... HOW SHARPER THAN A SERPENT'S TOOTH IS YOUR BETRAYAL!

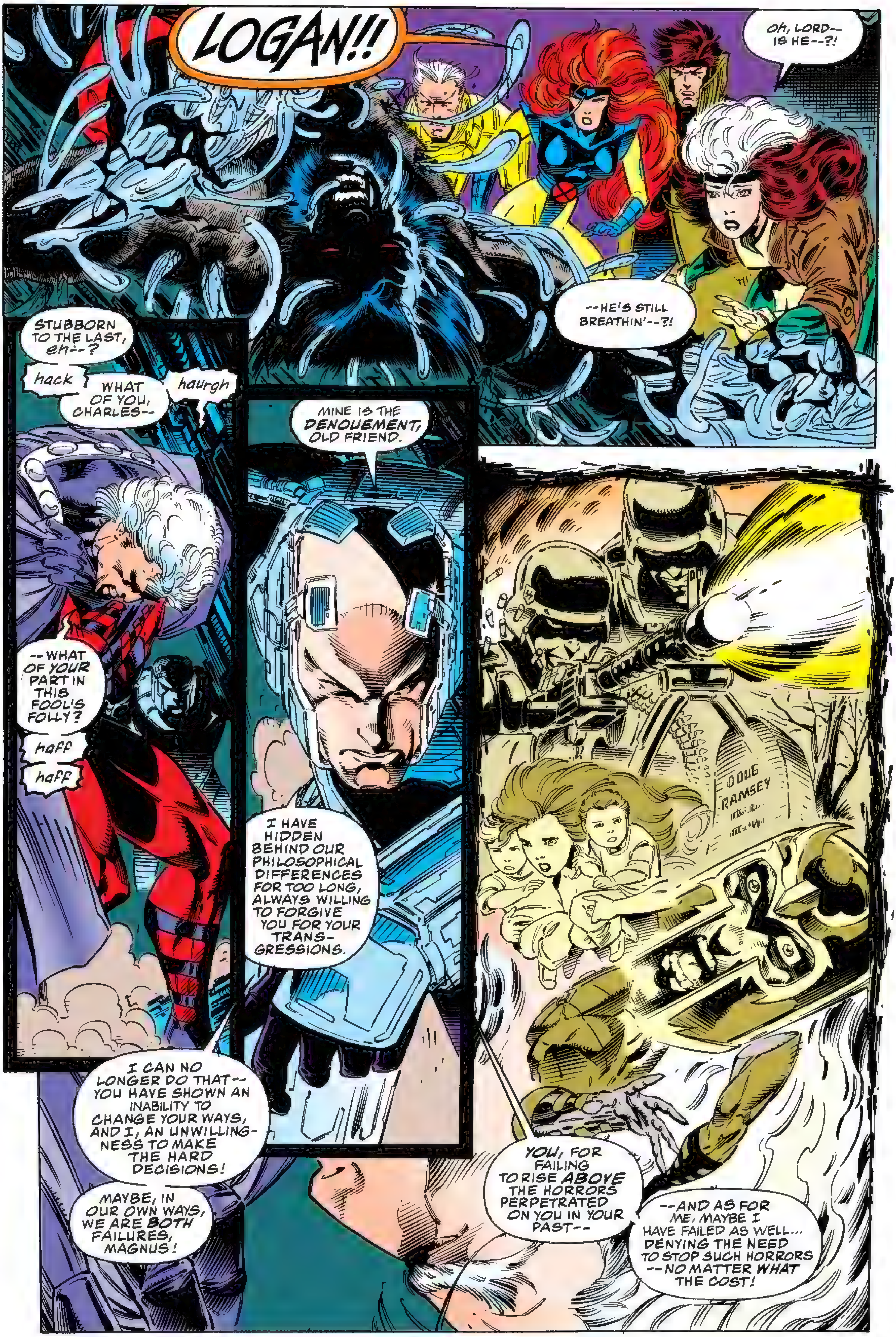
TIME AND TIME AGAIN, UPON LEARNING YOU AND YOUR SISTER, WANDA, THE SCARLET WITCH, WERE MY CHILDREN--THE CHILDREN OF MY BELOVED LOST MAGDA--
--YOU HAVE BEEN OFFERED THE OPPORTUNITY TO STAND BY MY SIDE--AS WAS YOUR RIGHT--AS WOULD HAVE BEEN MY JOY.
AND WHAT A WONDERFUL FATHER YOU WOULD'VE MADE, MAGNUS--
--FORCING YOUR CHILDREN TO SIT SUBSERVIENT TO YOUR WHIMS... UNABLE TO EVEN THINK FOR THEMSELVES--
--AS YOU LOCKED ONTO THE IRON IN THEIR BLOODSTREAMS AND MOLDED THEIR VERY THOUGHTS!
WE MISSED OUT ON SO MUCH, BY LOSING YOUR PARENTAL GUIDANCE, DIDN'T WE?
"PROFESSOR... THIS MEMORY... IT DIDN'T HAPPEN THIS WAY--"
"WHEN MAGNUS'S WIFE, MAGDA, LEFT HIM, SHE WAS PREGNANT WITH WANDA AND PIETRO--
"--AND IT WAS THE FIRST TIME HE HAD USED HIS POWERS IN FRONT OF HER.
"HE WASN'T MAGNETO THEN--SIMPLY ERIK MAGNUS LEHNSHERR..."
"CHARLES, IF HIS MEMORIES ARE TWISTING--FRACTURING--
"--HIS CURRENT LIFE IMPOSING ITSELF ON HIS PAST, THEN THAT MEANS--"
WHAT?
"IT MEANS, JEAN, THAT WE ARE FORCING HIM TO QUESTION HIS OWN JUDGMENT, AT LAST!"
VERY DEVIOUS, CHARLES. BUT IN THE FACE OF YOUR SUBVERSION... YOUR BEFOULING OF MY MIND... I STAND --RESOLUTE.
NO, FATHER, YOU DO NOT!
LOOK AT ME! LOOK AT WHAT I HAVE BECOME BECAUSE OF YOU!
UNABLE TO LOVE FREELY, UNABLE TO TRUST WILLINGLY--AFRAID TO TRULY LIVE A LIFE WITH MY WIFE--MY DAUGHTER!
I AM TIRED OF RUNNING AWAY FROM MY PROBLEMS!
I AM TIRED OF RUNNING AWAY FROM YOU!
KRAKK!

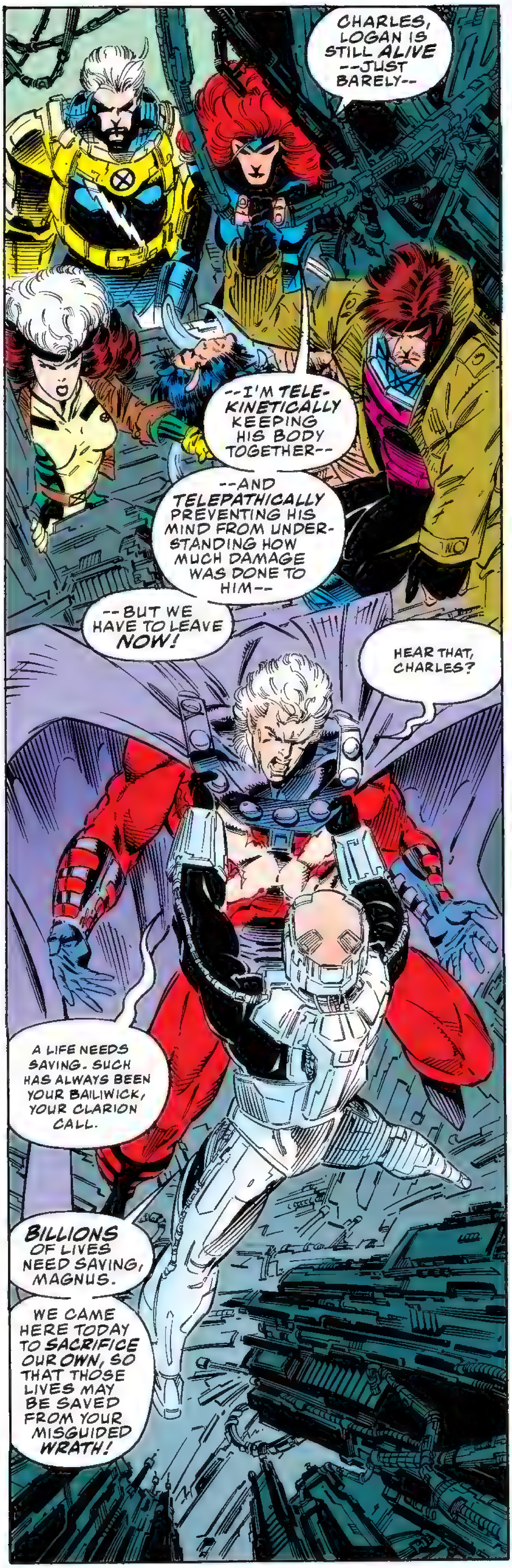

PERHAPS I DID *WRONG* BY YOU AND YOUR SISTER, PIETRO...
...BUT I *LOVED* YOUR MOTHER MORE THAN LIFE ITSELF.
AND I DO NOT NEED YOU TO *BLAME* ME FOR THINGS I SO *FREELY* BLAME MYSELF!
BUT CONSIDER THIS: YOU HAVE DONE EQUALLY WRONG BY *ME* AS WELL, MY SON!
BY *REJECTING* MY OFFER, YOU REJECT MY *HOPES*, MY *DREAMS*--
--MY CHANCE TO PASS ALONG AN *INHERITANCE* OF MUTANT FREEDOM ON TO YOU AND MY DESCENDANTS!
AND I *CANNOT* ALLOW YOU TO DO THAT, PIETRO!
THERE IS *TOO MUCH* AT STAKE FOR OUR PEOPLE, TO ALLOW THE SON OF THE OVERLORD TO REJECT HIS PATH!
I CANNOT HAVE MY *ONLY* SON LEAVE THE PARADISE I HOPE TO CREATE HERE--
--TO SEE HIM TRY AND *COMPROMISE* MY EFFORTS ON EARTH BELOW US!
I CANNOT ALLOW YOU TO *BETRAY* ME, PIETRO--TO BECOME MY *JUDAS*--
--AND SO, AS PAINFUL AS IT IS FOR ME, YOU MUST BE *SACRIFICED* FOR THE GOOD OF OF OUR PEOPLE--
SORRY, MAGGIE--
--*MY SON MUST BE SLAIN!*

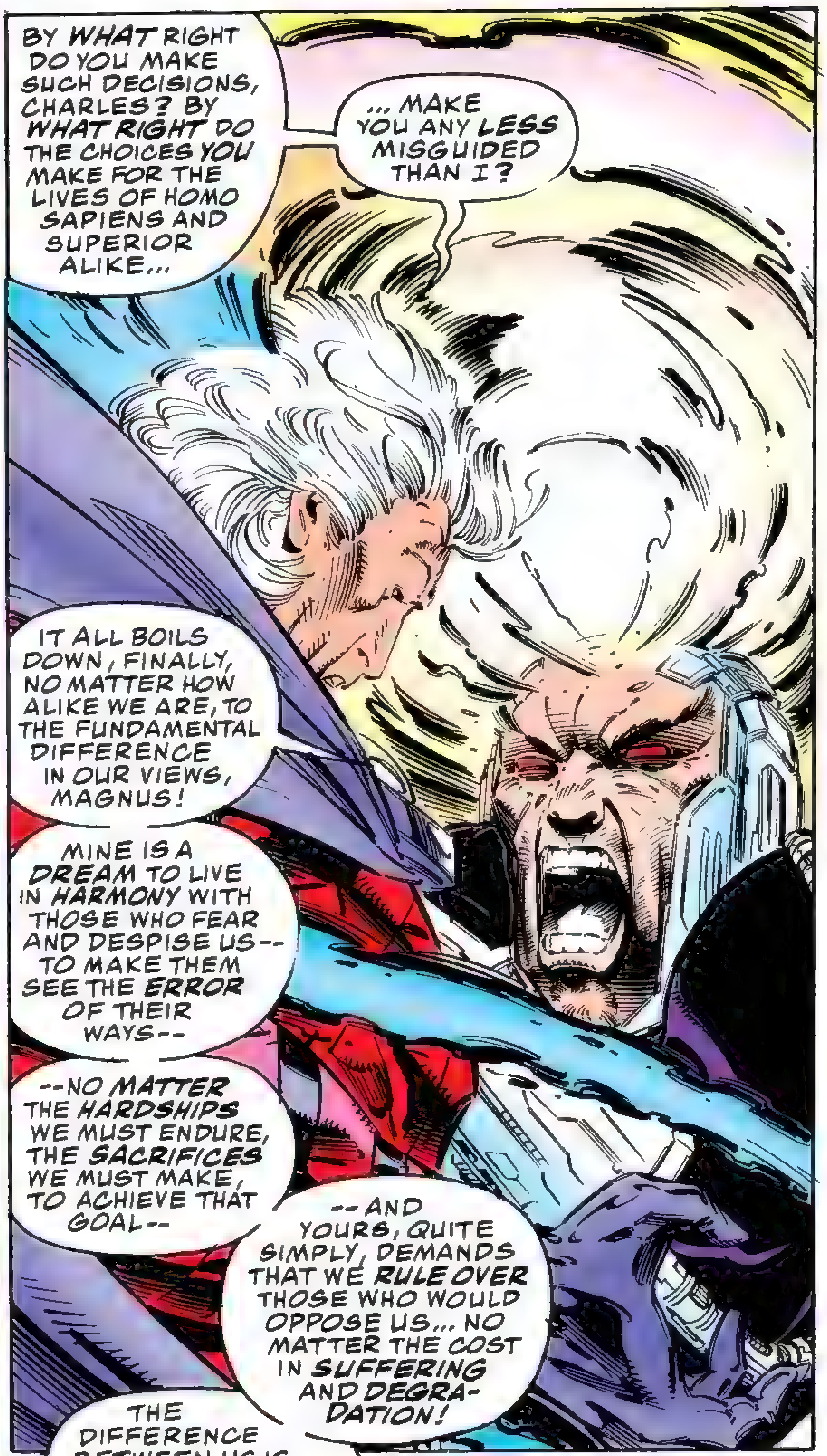
--THAT JUST AIN'T GONNA HAPPEN!
WOLVERINE--?! NO!
"JEAN, YOU MUST SEIZE ON THIS! IT IS THE KEY!--
"--MAGNUS'S FEELING THAT HIS 'CHILDREN' ALWAYS BETRAY HIM, ALWAYS FAIL HIM...
"FROM PIETRO AND WANDA DOWN TO FABIAN CORTEZ, WHO GATHERED THE ACOLYTES OF MAGNETO--
"--ONLY TO USE THEM IN HIS GRANDER SCHEME TO BETRAY MAGNETO AND KILL HIM!"
HESITATIN' AGAIN, MAGS?
BIG MISTAKE!
SHRAKK
'CAUSE HERE'S WHERE I SHOW YOU HOW WELL I LEARNED OUR LITTLE DANCE!
ahh
oh, LOGAN, LOGAN, LOGAN
YOU HAVE--DONE THIS--?
THE GAME'S OVER, BUB. ANY MAN WHO'D TRY AN' KILL HIS OWN SON DESERVES NO LESS.
DON'T LOOK SO SURPRISED. AFTER ALL, AIN'T IT WHAT YOU WOULDA DONE?
LOGAN ...NO!
JEAN--YOU'VE SEVERED THE MIND-PROBE?!
I NEED YOU, JEAN--MY CONTROL OVER THIS ARMOR IS TAXING ME GREATLY!
NOW--WHILE HE IS GRAVELY INJURED--
--IS OUR BEST HOPE OF PIERCING THE FINAL BARRIERS IN MAGNETO'S MIND!

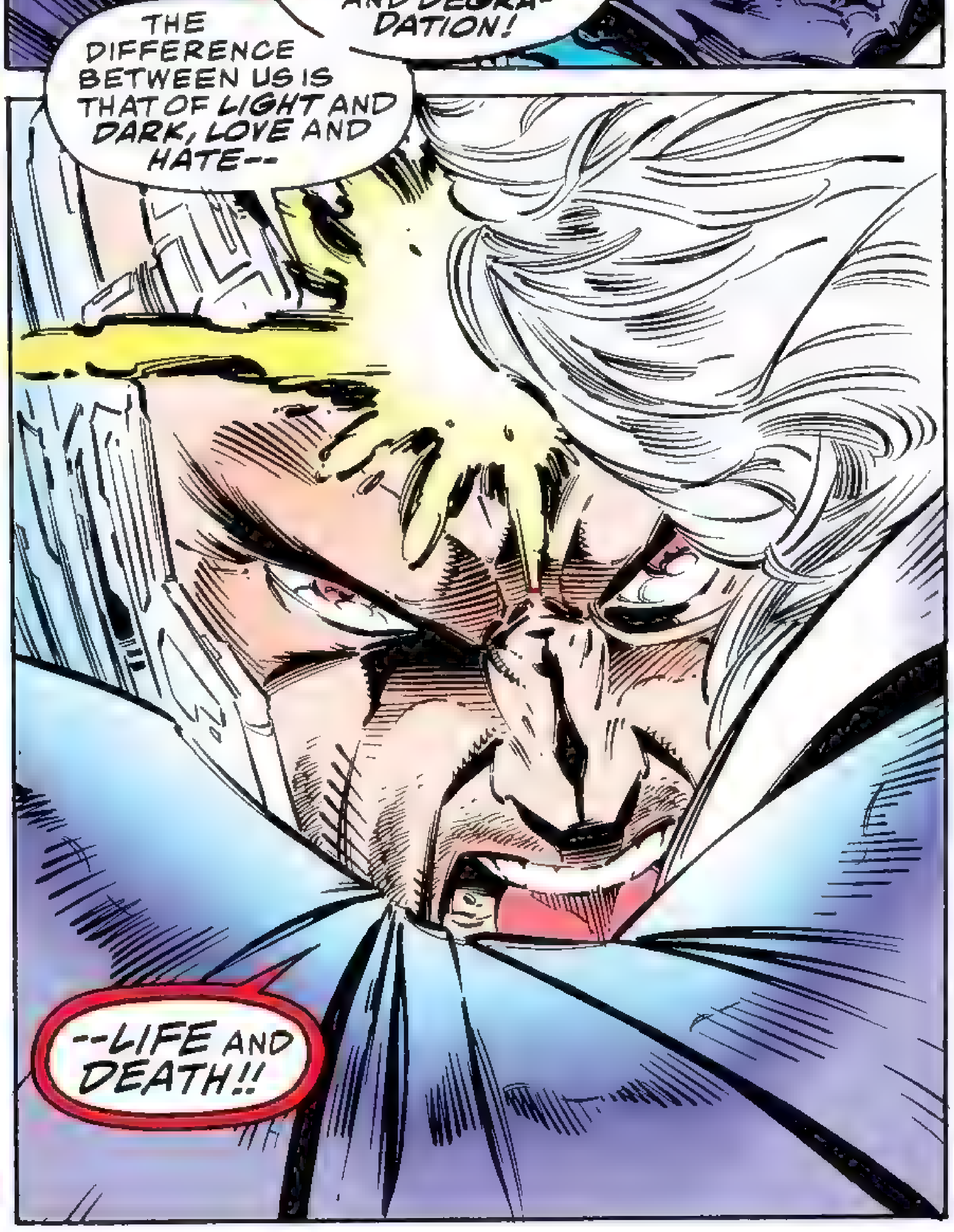

PROFESSOR! WHAT'S *HAPPENED* TO YOU? *LOOK* AT HIM! HE'S BLEEDING... BADLY!
HE'S SURVIVED *WORSE*.
IT'S IN *OUR* POWER TO PUT A PEACEFUL END TO THIS RIGHT NOW!
POWER IS *NOTHING*, JEAN. YOU HAVE IT. I HAVE IT.
WHAT MATTERS MOST ARE THE CHOICES WE MAKE ON *HOW* THAT POWER IS USED. AND MAGNUS HAS MADE HIS CHOICE *ABUNDANTLY* CLEAR. ASK THE MEN ON THE *LENINGRAD*. THE PEOPLE WHO DIED TODAY. ASK THEM ALL.
A PEACEFUL SOLUTION WAS LOST TO US LONG, LONG AGO. WE MUST ENTER HIS MIND AGAIN--QUICKLY, BEFORE--
OUR LONG ASSOCIATION, MY MOST VISCERAL ENEMY, MY MOST RESPECTED FOE--
IT ENDS FOR US BOTH NOW.
NO MORE, LOGAN. FOOLISH, FOOLISH MAN.
--IS OVER!
MAGNETIC FIRE COURSES THROUGH WOLVERINE'S BODY.
AND IT BEGINS WITH A SMALL TUG--
--AN ALMOST GENTLE PULL--
WHAT TH--?!
--A HARDER YANK--
SPLUCH!
--THEN A WRENCHING TEAR--
FLICHT!


LOGAN--? OH, LORD-- LOGAN!
NO! MAGNUS-- FOR THE LOVE OF GOD--DON'T DO THIS--
"NOW, PLAY THE INSOLENT; NOW, PLUNDER THE GOD'S PRIVILEGES AND GIVE THEM TO CREATURES OF A DAY.
"WHAT DROP OF YOUR SUFFERINGS CAN MORTALS SPARE YOU?"
WE ARE ALL BUT BIT PLAYERS IN A TRAGEDY FAR LARGER THAN ANY OF US...
...A TRAGEDY CALLED LIFE, LOGAN.
BUT TODAY, FOR YOU, PERHAPS FOR ME--
--THE CURTAIN FALLS...
...AND THE PLAY IS FINISHED!
SHREKKTTHH
WOLVERINE DOESN'T SCREAM. INDEED, HE DOESN'T EVEN HAVE TIME, AS THE ADAMANTIUM WHICH LONG AGO WAS BONDED TO HIS VERY BONES--
--IS DESTABILIZED ON A MOLECULAR LEVEL, RIPPED FROM ITS MOORINGS, AND FORCED THROUGH HIS OPEN WOUNDS--
--ERUPTING OUTWARD LIKE WATER BURSTING THROUGH A DAM!
AS HE FALLS, THE STILLNESS OF PURE HORROR SURROUNDS THE KILLING GROUND--
--BROKEN ONLY BY THE VOICE OF ONE PERSON WHO HAS, SINCE THE DAY SHE FIRST MET HIM, AND PERHAPS ALWAYS WILL--
--LOVE HIM...

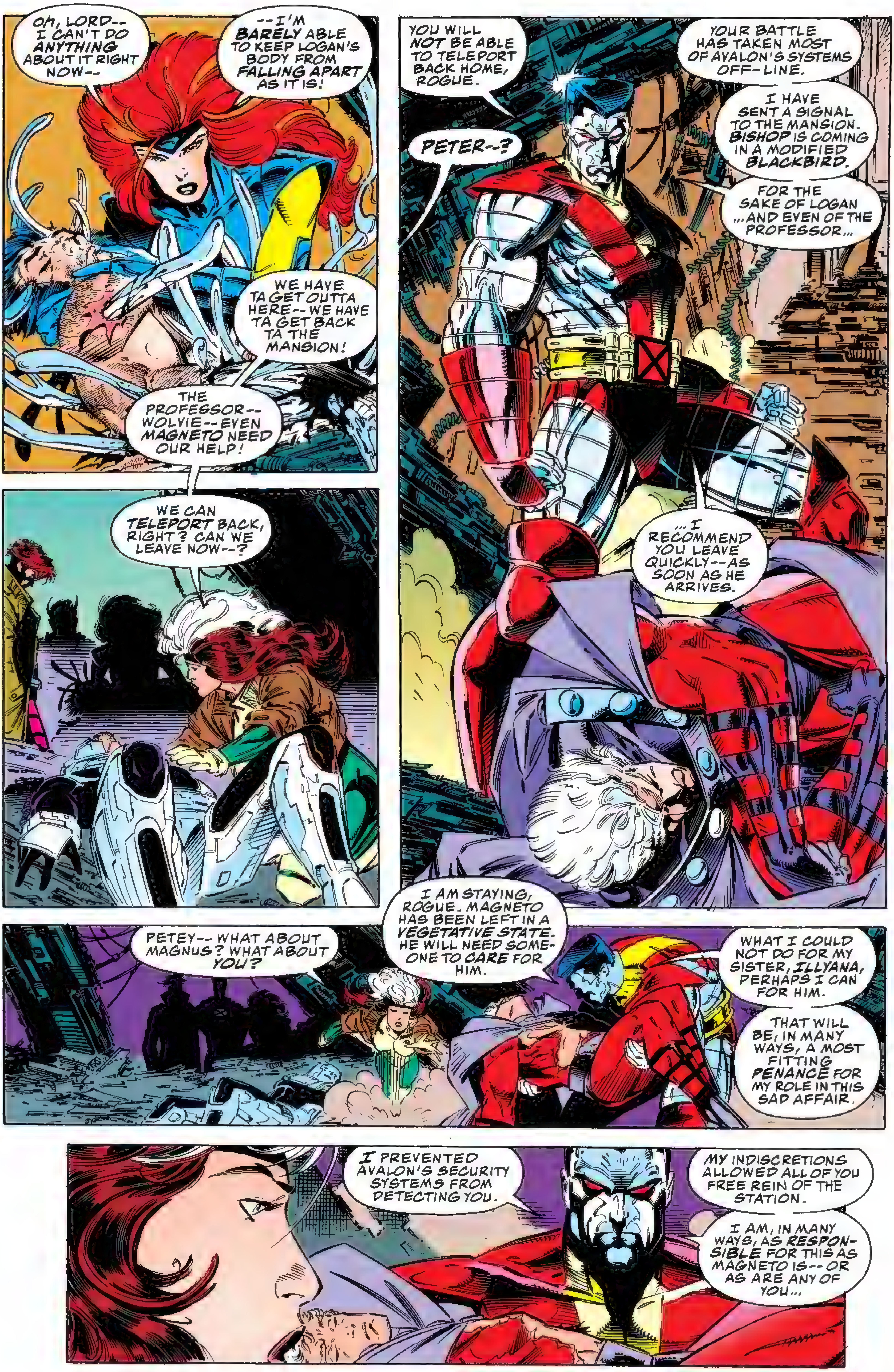

LOGAN!!
Oh, LORD--
IS HE--?!
--HE'S STILL BREATHIN'--?!
STUBBORN TO THE LAST, eh--?
hack
WHAT OF YOU, CHARLES--
haurgh
--WHAT OF YOUR PART IN THIS FOOL'S FOLLY?
haff
haff
MINE IS THE DENOUEMENT, OLD FRIEND.
I HAVE HIDDEN BEHIND OUR PHILOSOPHICAL DIFFERENCES FOR TOO LONG, ALWAYS WILLING TO FORGIVE YOU FOR YOUR TRANSGRESSIONS.
I CAN NO LONGER DO THAT--YOU HAVE SHOWN AN INABILITY TO CHANGE YOUR WAYS, AND I, AN UNWILLINGNESS TO MAKE THE HARD DECISIONS!
MAYBE, IN OUR OWN WAYS, WE ARE BOTH FAILURES, MAGNUS!
DOUG RAMSEY
YOU, FOR FAILING TO RISE ABOVE THE HORRORS PERPETRATED ON YOU IN YOUR PAST--
--AND AS FOR ME, MAYBE I HAVE FAILED AS WELL... DENYING THE NEED TO STOP SUCH HORRORS --NO MATTER WHAT THE COST!

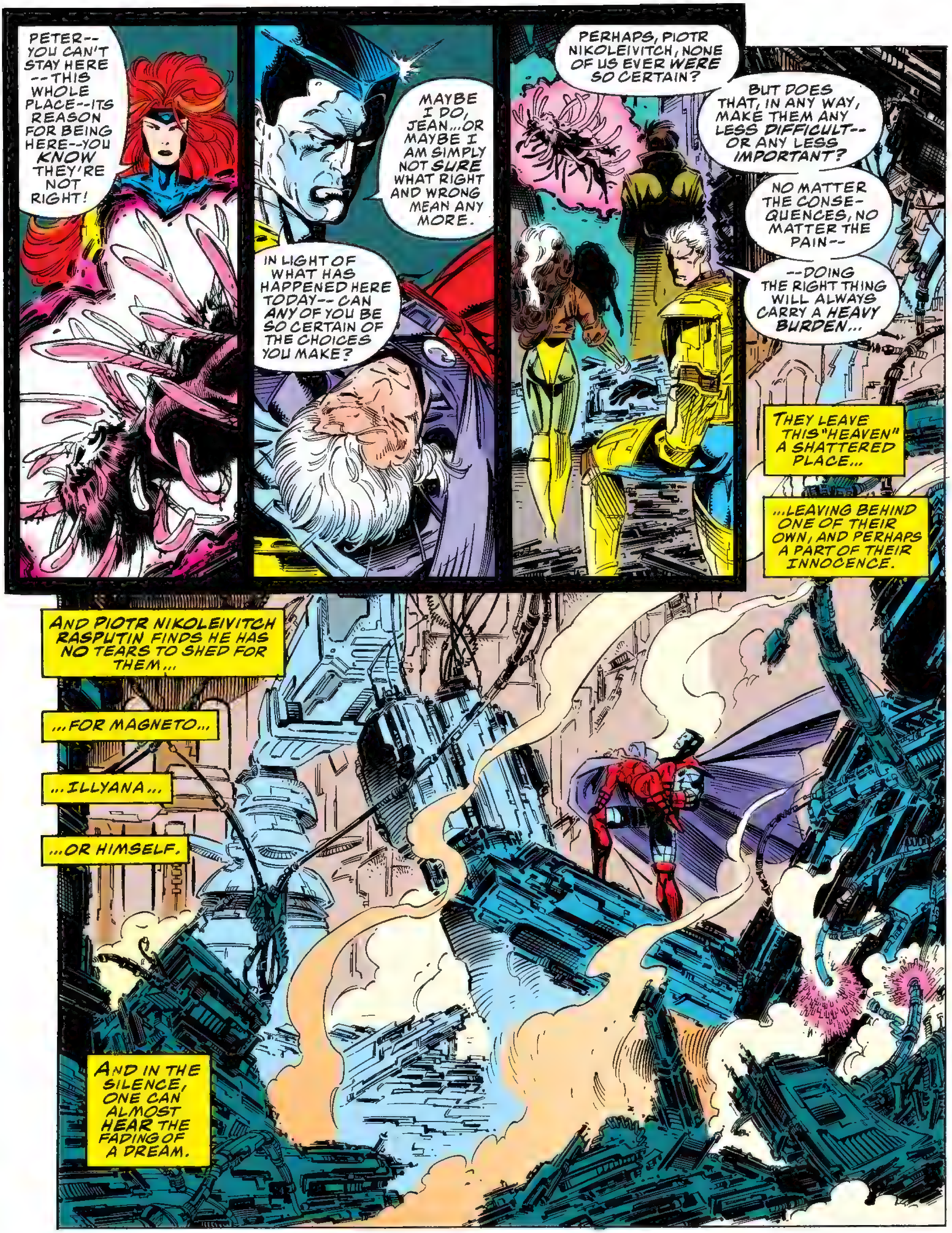

CHARLES, LOGAN IS STILL ALIVE --JUST BARELY--
--I'M TELEKINETICALLY KEEPING HIS BODY TOGETHER--
--AND TELEPATHICALLY PREVENTING HIS MIND FROM UNDERSTANDING HOW MUCH DAMAGE WAS DONE TO HIM--
--BUT WE HAVE TO LEAVE NOW!
HEAR THAT, CHARLES?
A LIFE NEEDS SAVING. SUCH HAS ALWAYS BEEN YOUR BAILIWICK, YOUR CLARION CALL.
BILLIONS OF LIVES NEED SAVING, MAGNUS.
WE CAME HERE TODAY TO SACRIFICE OUR OWN, SO THAT THOSE LIVES MAY BE SAVED FROM YOUR MISGUIDED WRATH!


BY WHAT RIGHT DO YOU MAKE SUCH DECISIONS, CHARLES? BY WHAT RIGHT DO THE CHOICES YOU MAKE FOR THE LIVES OF HOMO SAPIENS AND SUPERIOR ALIKE...
... MAKE YOU ANY LESS MISGUIDED THAN I?
IT ALL BOILS DOWN, FINALLY, NO MATTER HOW ALIKE WE ARE, TO THE FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE IN OUR VIEWS, MAGNUS!
MINE IS A DREAM TO LIVE IN HARMONY WITH THOSE WHO FEAR AND DESPISE US--TO MAKE THEM SEE THE ERROR OF THEIR WAYS--
--NO MATTER THE HARDSHIPS WE MUST ENDURE, THE SACRIFICES WE MUST MAKE, TO ACHIEVE THAT GOAL--
--AND YOURS, QUITE SIMPLY, DEMANDS THAT WE RULE OVER THOSE WHO WOULD OPPOSE US... NO MATTER THE COST IN SUFFERING AND DEGRADATION!

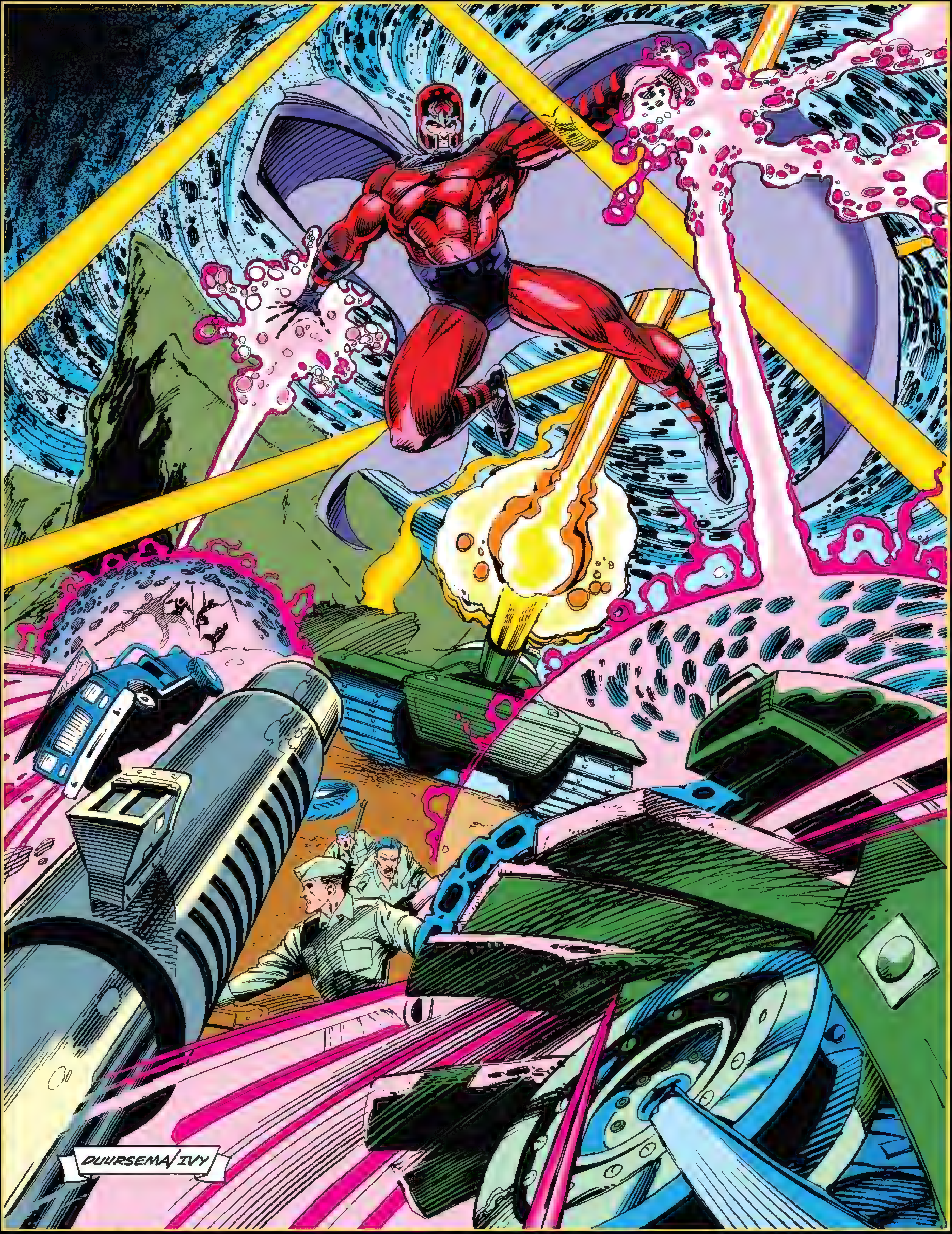

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US IS THAT OF LIGHT AND DARK, LOVE AND HATE--
--LIFE AND DEATH!!

NO MORE, MAGNUS--
NO MORE!!
LOGAN SHALL BE THE LAST! NO ONE ELSE WILL EVER SUFFER!
AHHHH...
CHAR--LES...
YOU CAUSED THE DEATHS OF HUNDREDS TODAY, MAGNUS--DEATHS I COULD HAVE PREVENTED HAD I STOPPED YOU YEARS AGO!
YOU HAVE KILLED TOO MANY, MAGNUS--
--AND I HAVE HAD ENOUGH!!
I WILL MAKE SURE--HERE AND NOW--ONCE AND FOR ALL--THAT YOU NEVER KILL AGAIN!!
...I NEVER THOUGHT...
...YOU WOULD...
THWUMP!
NO!!
MAGNUS--?!!
PROFESSOR--WHAT DID YOU DO TO HIM?
I TOOK AWAY HIS GREATEST WEAPONS... HIS HATRED...
...HIS EGO, HIS NIGHT-MARES... I TOOK THEM ALL...
...I TOOK HIS MIND AWAY FROM HIM... God forgive me...
JEAN! HE'S BARELY BREATHIN'!!

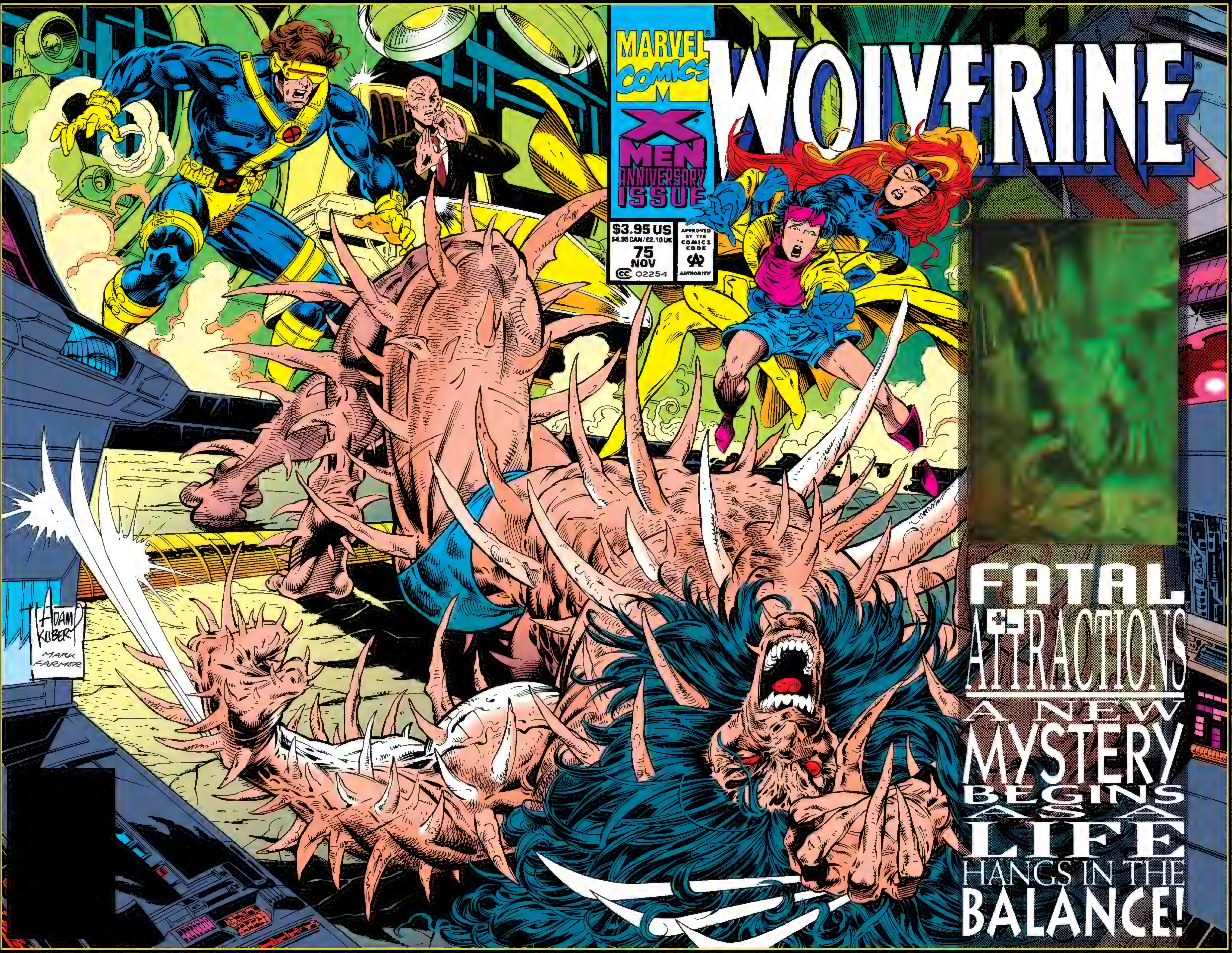

Oh, LORD-- I CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT RIGHT NOW--
--I'M BARELY ABLE TO KEEP LOGAN'S BODY FROM FALLING APART AS IT IS!
WE HAVE TA GET OUTTA HERE-- WE HAVE TA GET BACK TA THE MANSION!
THE PROFESSOR-- WOLVIE-- EVEN MAGNETO NEED OUR HELP!
WE CAN TELEPORT BACK, RIGHT? CAN WE LEAVE NOW--?
YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO TELEPORT BACK HOME, ROGUE.
PETER--?
YOUR BATTLE HAS TAKEN MOST OF AVALON'S SYSTEMS OFF-LINE.
I HAVE SENT A SIGNAL TO THE MANSION. BISHOP IS COMING IN A MODIFIED BLACKBIRD.
FOR THE SAKE OF LOGAN ...AND EVEN OF THE PROFESSOR...
...I RECOMMEND YOU LEAVE QUICKLY--AS SOON AS HE ARRIVES.
PETEY-- WHAT ABOUT MAGNUS? WHAT ABOUT YOU?
I AM STAYING, ROGUE. MAGNETO HAS BEEN LEFT IN A VEGETATIVE STATE. HE WILL NEED SOMEONE TO CARE FOR HIM.
WHAT I COULD NOT DO FOR MY SISTER, ILLYANA, PERHAPS I CAN FOR HIM.
THAT WILL BE, IN MANY WAYS, A MOST FITTING PENANCE FOR MY ROLE IN THIS SAD AFFAIR.
I PREVENTED AVALON'S SECURITY SYSTEMS FROM DETECTING YOU.
MY INDISCRETIONS ALLOWED ALL OF YOU FREE REIN OF THE STATION.
I AM, IN MANY WAYS, AS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS AS MAGNETO IS-- OR AS ARE ANY OF YOU...


PETER--YOU CAN'T STAY HERE--THIS WHOLE PLACE--ITS REASON FOR BEING HERE--YOU KNOW THEY'RE NOT RIGHT!
MAYBE I DO, JEAN...OR MAYBE I AM SIMPLY NOT SURE WHAT RIGHT AND WRONG MEAN ANY MORE.
IN LIGHT OF WHAT HAS HAPPENED HERE TODAY--CAN ANY OF YOU BE SO CERTAIN OF THE CHOICES YOU MAKE?
PERHAPS, PIOTR NIKOLEIVITCH, NONE OF US EVER WERE SO CERTAIN?
BUT DOES THAT, IN ANY WAY, MAKE THEM ANY LESS DIFFICULT--OR ANY LESS IMPORTANT?
NO MATTER THE CONSEQUENCES, NO MATTER THE PAIN--
--DOING THE RIGHT THING WILL ALWAYS CARRY A HEAVY BURDEN...
THEY LEAVE THIS "HEAVEN" A SHATTERED PLACE...
...LEAVING BEHIND ONE OF THEIR OWN, AND PERHAPS A PART OF THEIR INNOCENCE.
AND PIOTR NIKOLEIVITCH RASPUTIN FINDS HE HAS NO TEARS TO SHED FOR THEM...
...FOR MAGNETO...
...ILLYANA...
...OR HIMSELF.
AND IN THE SILENCE, ONE CAN ALMOST HEAR THE FADING OF A DREAM.

THE STORY CONTINUES IN ***WOLVERINE #75*** *--AS THE X-MEN FACE A STUNNING LOSS! AND NEXT MONTH YOU* ***MUST*** *READ* ***AVENGERS #368*** *BEFORE JOINING US HERE, AS* ***BLOODTIES*** *--THE X-MEN / AVENGERS CROSSOVER BEGINS!!*


DUURSEMA/IVY

MAGNETO #0 PINUP BY JAN DUURSEMA, CHRIS IVY & CARLOS LOPEZ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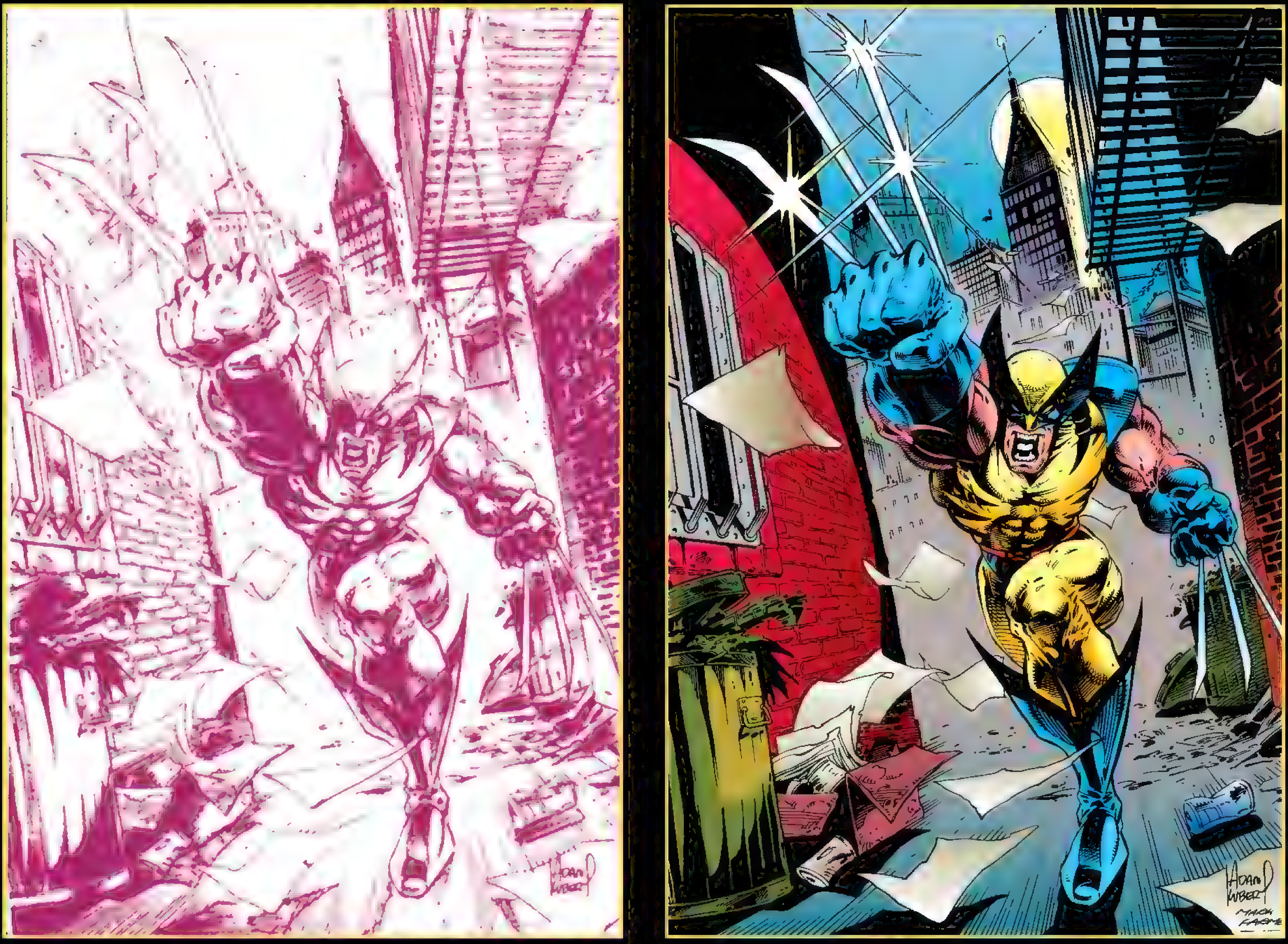
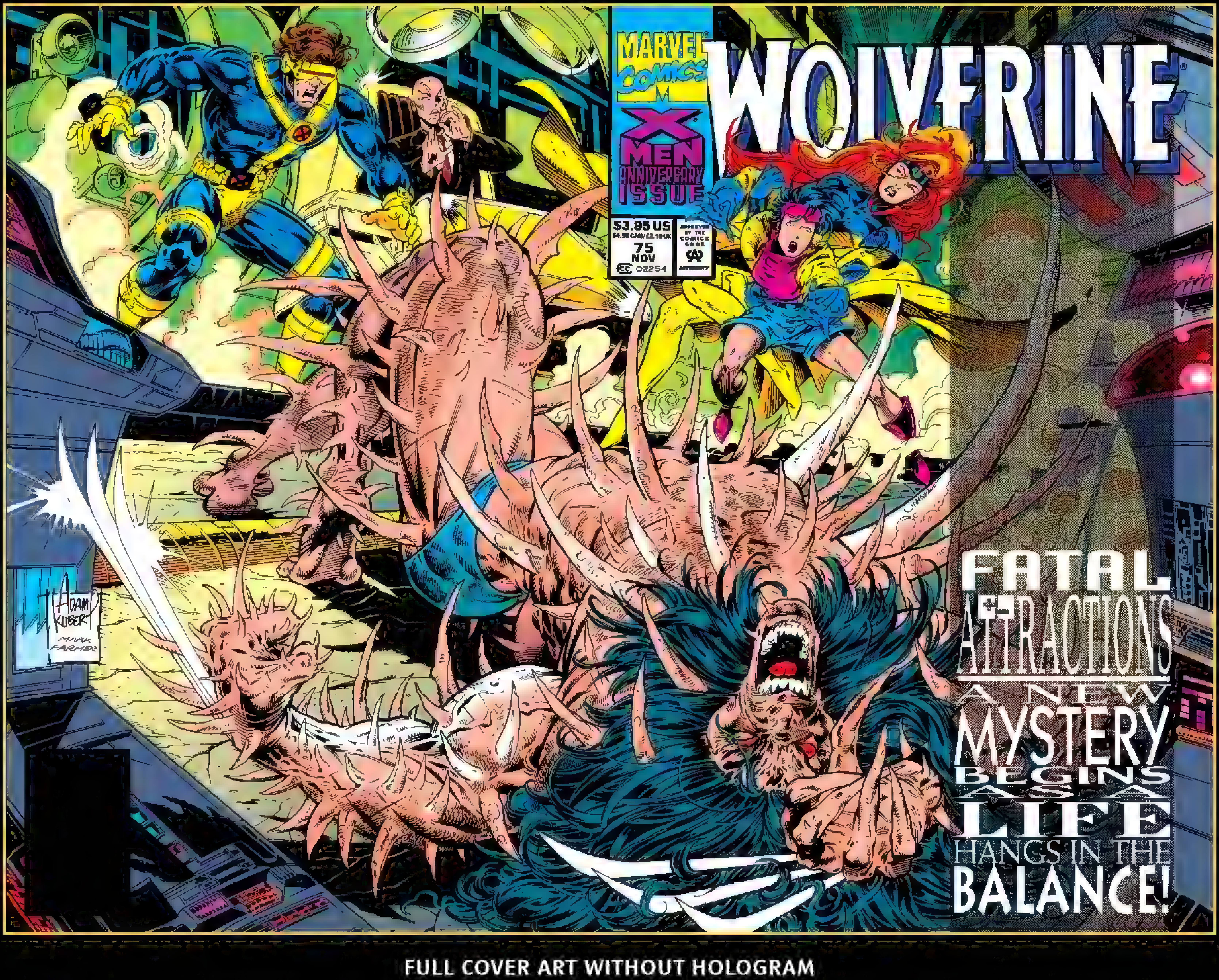
A NEW MYSTERY BEGINS AS A LIFE HANGS IN THE BALANCE!
ADAM KUBERT
MARK FARMER



WOLVERINE #75 HOLOGRAM ORIGINAL PENCILS BY ADAM KUBERT, AND INKS BY MARK FARMER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FULL COVER ART WITHOUT HOLOGRAM

YOU EVER BEEN HURT SO BAD, YOU COULDN'T HEAR ANYTHING BUT A HIGH-PITCHED ROAR...
Y'ALL HAVE TO *DO* SOMETHING FOR HIM, PROFESSOR...
...AND THEN YOU REALIZED THAT IT WAS THE SOUND O' YOURSELF, *SCREAMIN'?*
--WE JUST CAN'T LET LOGAN *DIE* NOT AFTER ALL WE'VE JUST BEEN THROUGH!
HIS WOUNDS ARE SO GRAVE THAT EVEN HIS *MUTANT HEALING FACTOR* AND HIS INDOMITABLE *WILL* ARE TAXED TO THEIR VERY *LIMITS!*
THE *MEDI-UNIT* WE ENCASED HIM IN IS DOING ALL IT CAN TO STABILIZE HIS *PHYSICAL* TRAUMA...
...I AM AFRAID IT WILL REQUIRE A *PSI-LINK* INCURSION INTO THE CORE OF HIS SUBCONSCIOUS TO ALLEVIATE THE *PSYCHIC TRAUMA.*
JEAN...?
I'M READY, PROFESSOR. BUT ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE UP TO THIS?
TAKE MY SEAT, PIETRO.
THE *COMMANDER'S* SEAT? BUT, *BISHOP*--
JUST *DO* IT.

Stan Lee presents
NIGHTMARES PERSIST
THERE'S A WORLD ON THE OTHER SIDE O' PAIN, FULL O' HORROR AND HOPELESSNESS AND CONCENTRATED SUFFERIN'...
...BUT THERE'S NO *FEAR* THERE.
WHAT'S THERE TO FEAR WHEN YOU'RE IN THE MIDDLE O' THE *WORST* THAT CAN HAPPEN?
MY HEALTH IS UNIMPORTANT, JEAN. LOGAN NEEDS US... AND I WILL *NOT* FAIL HIM.
WE'RE AT THE EPICENTER OF LOGAN'S MOST SUPPRESSED CATACLYSMIC MEMORIES--
--SYNAPSES LONG DORMANT, NOW TRIGGERED BY THE BRUTAL ASSOCIATION OF HIS TERRIBLE ORDEAL AT THE HANDS OF *MAGNETO*!
WHAT ARE WAITING FOR, PROFESSOR? WE HAVE TO GET RID OF ALL THESE--
NO!
YOU KNOW BETTER THAN THAT, JEAN. I REALIZE YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT LOGAN, BUT WE MUST TREAD EVER SO *CAUTIOUSLY* HERE!
THESE TRAUMATIC MEMORIES ARE INTER-WOVEN INTO THE FABRIC OF LOGAN'S *PERSONALITY*...

LARRY HAMA
WRITER
ADAM KUBERT
PENCILER
MARK FARMER
DAN GREEN & MARK PENNINGTON
INKERS
PAT BROSSEAU
LETTERER
STEVE BUCCELLATO
COLORIST
BOB HARRAS
EDITOR
TOM DEFALCO
EDITOR IN CHIEF

"...JUST AS THE *ADAMANTIUM* WAS BONDED TO WOLVERINE'S *BONES!*
" TO INDISCRIMINATELY EXCISE THESE MEMORIES WOULD BE AS DAMAGING TO HIS *MIND* AS *MAGNETO'S* FORCED EXTRACTION OF WOLVERINE'S ADAMANTIUM WAS TO HIS *BODY!*
"AS... DAMAGING AS WHAT I DID TO MAGNETO."
HOW CAN WE JUST STAND BY HERE AND DO *NOTHING*. WHAT WAS THE *PURPOSE* OF COMING IN HERE?
TO WAIT AND WATCH AND TO BE PREPARED TO COUNTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE *MATRIX* UPON WHICH THE WEB OF HIS PERSONALITY IS SPUN;
TO BE *ENCOURAGEMENT* IN THE REALM OF *DESPAIR;*
TO BE *FRIENDS* AT THE BRINK OF THE ULTIMATE *LONELINESS.*

LOGAN!
HE JUST PASSED *THROUGH* US, LIKE A *PHANTOM*--
--AND HE *IGNORED* US!
NO, JEAN-- HE IS SIMPLY IN TRANSITION FROM ONE TRIGGERED MEMORY TO ANOTHER. *WE* ARE THE PHANTOMS.
WE ARE NO MORE THAN A SERIES OF ELECTRICAL IMPULSES CHASING THOSE OTHER IMPULSES WHICH COMPRISE HIS MEMORY THROUGH THE NEURONS OF HIS BRAIN!
THERE'S SOMETHING *IMMENSE* COMING OVER THE *HORIZON!*
THERE'S NO HORIZON HERE!
REMEMBER, OUR POINT OF VIEW IS SKEWED BY THE FACT THAT WE ARE INADEQUATELY INTERPRETING ANOTHER PERSON'S VISUAL PERCEPTIONS--
THIS IS THE STUFF OF *FEVER DREAMS!*
BUT HAUNTINGLY *FAMILIAR...*
FAMILIAR? THIS *ALIEN* LANDSCAPE?
NOT *FAMILIAR*, MAYBE-- BUT DEFINITELY NOT *ALIEN!*
AH! I *SEE!* IT WAS THE *SCALE!*
SCALE? I DON'T--

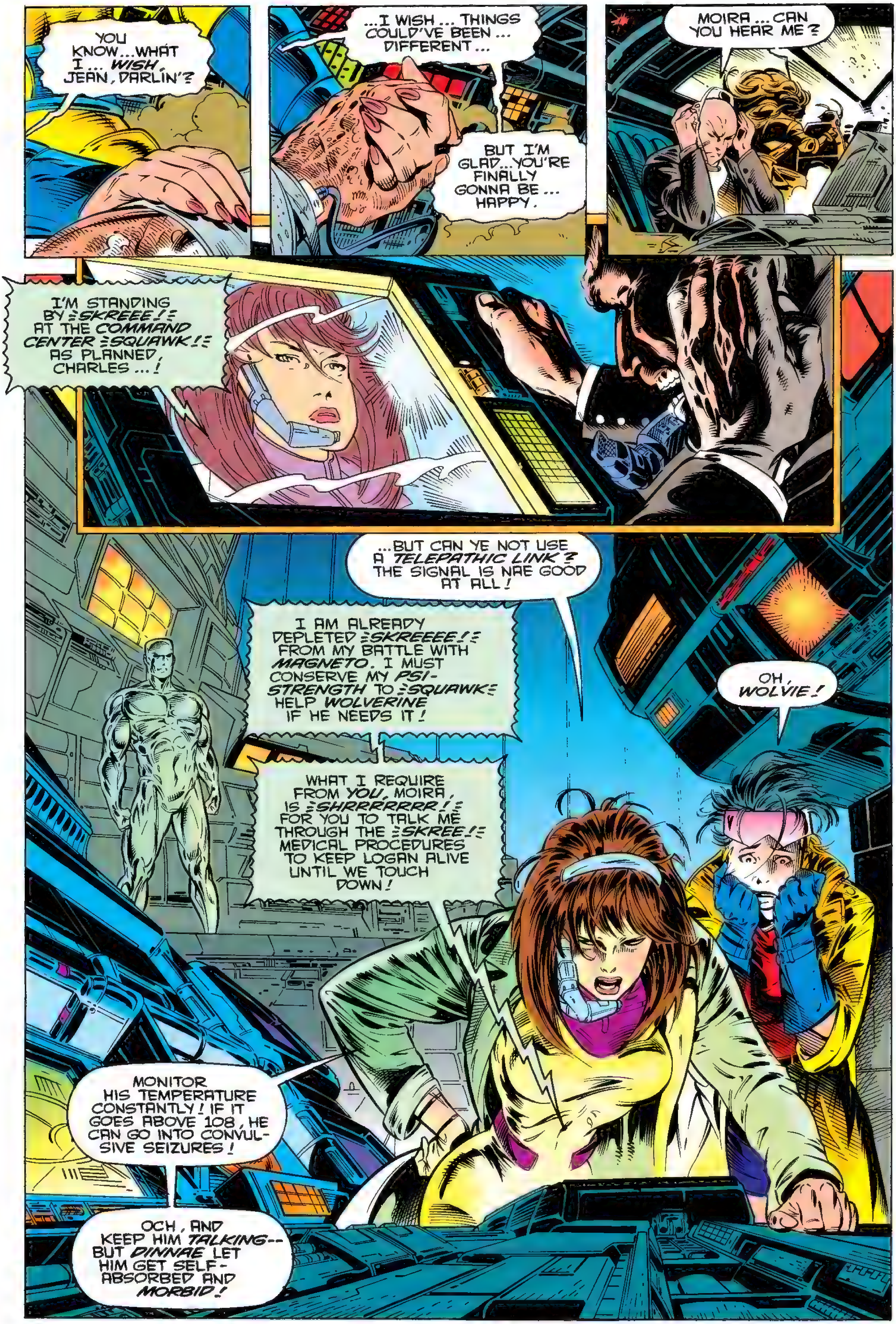
--OH, LORD!
IT'S THE *GENESIS TANK* AT THE *WEAPON X PROJECT!*
WE'RE NOW PRIVY TO EVENTS THAT LOGAN HAS NEVER SEEN FIT TO *SHARE* WITH US!
WE'RE HERE TO *HELP*, HIM, PROFESSOR-- BUT THIS-- THIS IS A *VIOLATION* OF THE WORST ORDER!
IT WAS *WRONG* WITH MAGNETO, IT'S WRONG HERE!
I DID WHAT *HAD* TO BE DONE WITH MAGNETO. AS FOR LOGAN ... THE TERMINATION OF THIS *PSI-LINK* HAS ALREADY BEEN NECESSITATED...

...BY THE PLIGHT OF OUR RE-ENTRY VEHICLE!
WE HAVE A TOTAL FAILURE IN THE MAIN *HEAT SHIELD!*
TELL *GAMBIT* TO SWITCH TO *BACK-UPS* FROM THE *ENGINEERING CONSOLE!*
I HEAR YOU, *BISHOP!* THERMOSTAT TO BACK-UP HEAT SHIELD IS *DOWN!* WE UP DAT CREEK, MON AMI!
CAN WE SCRUB THIS DESCENT AND REPLOT A SHALLOWER ANGLE? ON A QUINJET, SUCH A MANEUVER WOULD BE FAIRLY SIMPLE.
THE *BLACKBIRD* WAS NEVER DESIGNED TO FUNCTION AS AN ORBITAL SHUTTLE...
...WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH *FUEL* TO REGAIN A STABILIZED ORBIT!
WE HAVE TO PLAY OUT THIS HAND AS IT WAS DEALT. USE THE MAIN COMPUTER TO BYPASS THE THERMOSTAT CONTROLS...
...AND ADVISE THE OTHERS THAT THE *RIDE QUALITY* IS ON A *DOWN CURVE!*
DOWN CURVE?
YOU MEAN IT'S GOING TO GET *WORSE?*
LOOK OUT--!
--THE *MEDI-UNIT* SNAPPED *LOOSE!*

SKRAKKK!
HE'S CONSCIOUS!
ARRRRRRRRRGGHH!
THE SHOCK HAS *AWAKENED* HIM!
RE-SECURE THE MEDI-UNIT!
HOLD HIM STEADY, WHILE I ADMINISTER ANOTHER INJECTION OF *META-MORPHINE*--
NO *PAIN-KILLERS*, CHARLES...
IT HURTS 'CAUSE... MY BODY IS... *FIXIN'* ITSELF.
I CAN... *TAKE* IT.
DON'T... WANNA BE... *NUMB*...
GONNA BE... NUMB *FOREVER*... AFTER I *BUY* THE... *FARM*!

OH, LORD... AH CAN *SEE* HIM KNITTIN' HIMSELF BACK TOGETHER!
IF THE TRAUMA WAS *LOCALIZED* AND NOT OF SUCH *MAGNITUDE*, HIS MUTANT HEALING FACTOR WOULD HAVE MADE HIM WHOLE ALREADY...
I'D BE... DANCIN' IN... THE AISLES, CHARLIE.
WE DON'T HAVE A CLUE ABOUT HOW THE HEALING FACTOR WORKS...
...AND THIS AMOUNT OF DAMAGE MAY BE TOO MUCH OF A *STRAIN*...
...ON AN OVERLOADED SYSTEM--
--JUST AS I *FEARED!* THE WOUNDS *REOPEN!* THE HEALING FACTOR CAN'T KEEP UP WITH ONGOING TISSUE DETERIORATION!
HE'S BURNING UP WITH *FEVER!* CAN THE *MEDI-UNIT* COOL HIS BODY TEMPERATURE DOWN ENOUGH TO KEEP HIM FROM GOING INTO *SHOCK?*
THE UNIT IS JUST AN *INTERIM* DEVICE. IT IS ONLY MEANT TO *STABILIZE* A PATIENT EN ROUTE TO A PROPER MEDICAL FACILITY!

I HAD THOUGHT THAT THE WORST WAS *OVER* WHEN I FLEW THE BLACKBIRD UP TO *AVALON* TO BRING BACK THE ASSAULT TEAM!
WATCH THE *PITCH INDICATOR!*
CORRECT THE ANGLE OF ATTACK...
...ONE *DEGREE* OF DECLINATION CAN INCREASE OUR DRAG-FRICTION OVER THE RED-LINE!
OVER?
OUR ALREADY VISIBLE INCANDESCENCE WOULD FLARE BRIEFLY AND FADE TO BLACK AS OUR MOLECULES DISPERSED OVER NEW JERSEY!
THERE CAN *NEVER* BE A RESOLUTION FOR PEOPLE LIKE US, BISHOP...
...FATE HAS NEVER BEEN THAT KIND.
LOOK, DADDY! A *SHOOTING STAR!*
MAKE A *WISH*, SON...
DAD


YOU KNOW...WHAT I... WISH, JEAN, DARLIN'?
...I WISH... THINGS COULD'VE BEEN... DIFFERENT...
BUT I'M GLAD...YOU'RE FINALLY GONNA BE... HAPPY.
MOIRA...CAN YOU HEAR ME?
I'M STANDING BY =SKREEE!= AT THE COMMAND CENTER =SQUAWK!= AS PLANNED, CHARLES...!
...BUT CAN YE NOT USE A TELEPATHIC LINK? THE SIGNAL IS NAE GOOD AT ALL!
I AM ALREADY DEPLETED =SKREEEE!= FROM MY BATTLE WITH MAGNETO. I MUST CONSERVE MY PSI-STRENGTH TO =SQUAWK= HELP WOLVERINE IF HE NEEDS IT!
WHAT I REQUIRE FROM YOU, MOIRA, IS =SHRRRRRRR!= FOR YOU TO TALK ME THROUGH THE =SKREE!= MEDICAL PROCEDURES TO KEEP LOGAN ALIVE UNTIL WE TOUCH DOWN!
OH, WOLVIE!
MONITOR HIS TEMPERATURE CONSTANTLY! IF IT GOES ABOVE 108, HE CAN GO INTO CONVULSIVE SEIZURES!
OCH, AND KEEP HIM TALKING-- BUT DINNAE LET HIM GET SELF-ABSORBED AND MORBID!

WE HAVE A *RED LIGHT* ON THE *CANOPY STRESS MONITOR!*
HOLOGRAPHIC HEADS-UP-DISPLAYS AND LCD DIRECT-SITUATION READ-OUTS ON LINE...!
...ACTIVATING BLAST SHIELDS!
SHIELD
SHOOOMP!
I 'SPOSE IT'S SEAT-O' THE PANTS FLYIN' FROM HERE ON IN--
LORDY! A WHOLE *INSTRUMENT PANEL* WENT *BALLISTIC!*
THAT WAS THE *FLY-BY-WIRE INTERFACE!*
GAMBIT, DO WE HAVE A BACK-UP ON THE ENGINEERING CONSOLE?
WHOOMP!
WHAT WE HAVE, IS CIRCUIT BOARDS EN FLAMBE'!
WITHOUT THE INTERFACE AND THE COMPUTER MAKING CONSTANT LIGHTNING-FAST ATTITUDE CORRECTIONS WE'LL WOBBLE INTO AN UNCONTROLLABLE *SPIN!*
PROFESSOR! LOGAN CAN'T TAKE THIS! HIS HEART-VALVE TIMING IS FLUCTUATING!
QUICKSILVER! BYPASS THE *COMPUTER!* DO THE CONTROL CORRECTIONS *MANUALLY!*

OL' PIETRO'S MORE'N A MATCH FOR ANY OL' FLY-BY-WIRE INTERFACE, WHATEVER THAT IS!
WHY DIDN'T WE THINK O' THAT?
BISHOP DID.
HE HAD ME TAKE THE COMMANDER'S SHIP BECAUSE ALL THE MANUAL OVERRIDE CONTROLS ARE HERE BEFORE THE SITUATION DETERIORATED!
GAMBIT!
ICI!
ROGUE'S NEEDED UP ON THE FLIGHT DECK, SO WE NEED AN EXTRA PAIR OF HANDS TO HELP WITH LOGAN!
CHARLIE--
--I GOTTA... TALK TO YA, CHARLIE--
YOU GOTTA PROMISE ME YOU'LL TAKE CARE O' THINGS FOR ME AND ESPECIALLY, YA GOTTA WATCH OUT FOR JUBILEE--
WHAT'S HE TALKING ABOUT??
HE'S TALKING LIKE HE'S NOT GOING TO MAKE IT! HE'S NEVER SAID ANYTHING LIKE THAT BEFORE!!!!
YE CANNAE STAY HERE IF YE CANNAE CONTROL YOURSELF, YOUNG LADY!
THIS IS A TWO-WAY COMMUNICATIONS LINK!

SCHRRRRRIIIPPPP!
WE JUST LOST THE RIGHT AILERON AND FLAPS!
WE HAVE A STRESS CRACK IN THE WING SKIN...
...AND IT'S WIDENING TOWARDS THE CABIN!!
QUICKSILVER-- CAN YOU CORRECT ALTITUDE WITH ONLY THE LEFT WING CONTROL SURFACES?
IMPOSSIBLE! ALTITUDE IS DECAYING INTO A WOBBLE THAT IS GENERATING RESONATING WAVES...
...THAT WILL TEAR US APART IN 5.247 SECONDS!
JEAN! I'M GOING TO CONCENTRATE ON KEEPING LOGAN ALIVE! IT IS UP TO YOU...
"...TO KEEP THE BLACKBIRD TOGETHER--
"--WITH YOUR TELEKINETIC POWER!"

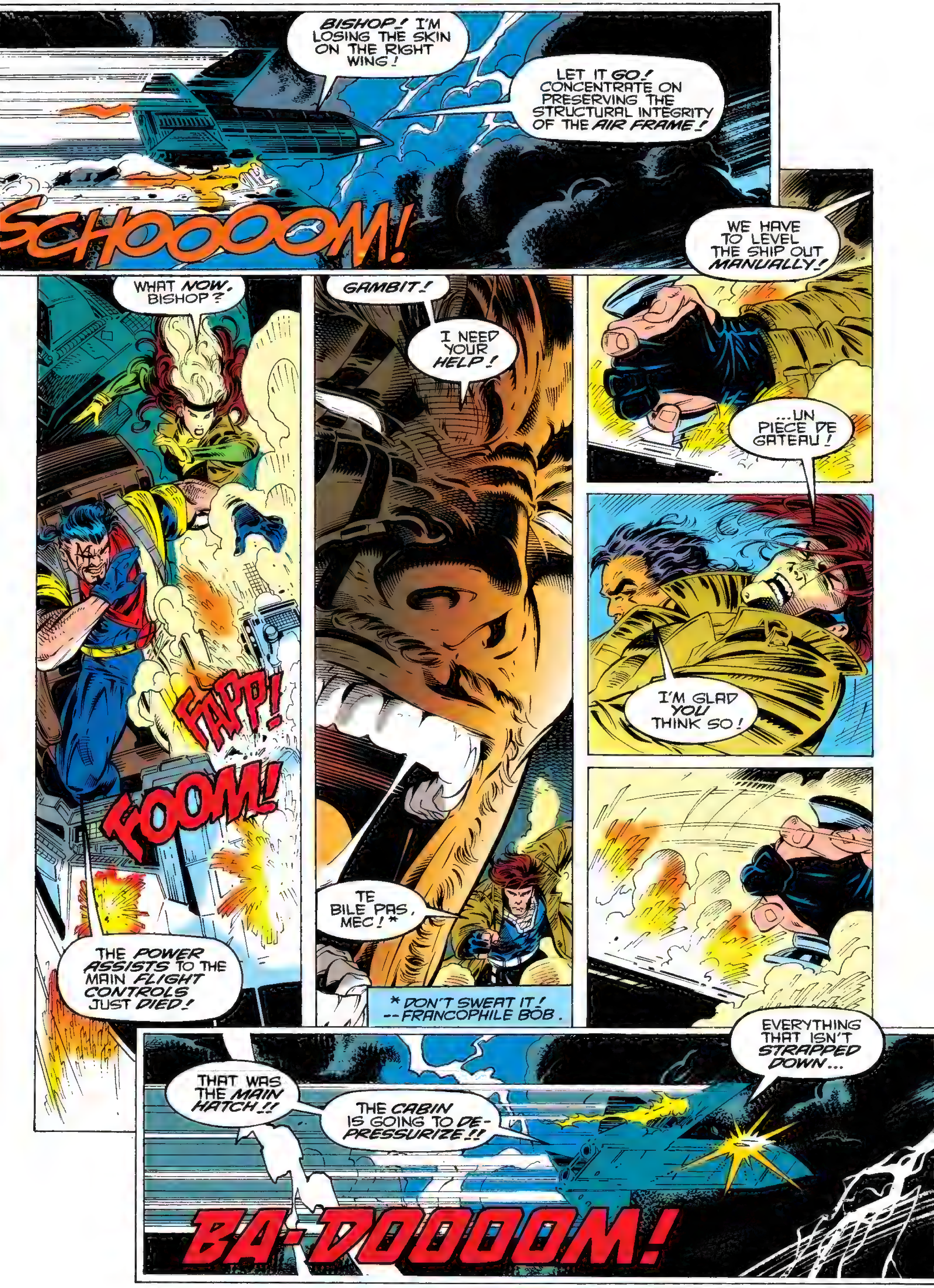
SHE *DID* IT! WE'RE *STABILIZ-ING!*
BUT HOW LONG CAN SHE KEEP UP THE INTENSE *CONCENTRATION* NEEDED TO HOLD THE *AIRFRAME TOGETHER?*
IN SALEM CENTER...
MOIRA! WHAT'S GOING *ON* UP THERE...?
...WE WERE OUT PREPPING THE LANDING DOCK AND WE *HEARD--*
THEY'VE FIXED THINGS FOR THE TIME BEING, BUT THEY'RE NAE OOT O' THE WOODS YET!
IS *CHARLES--*
WOLVIE...
ARE THEY--?
LOGAN! WHAT ABOUT *LOGAN??*
WHY ISN'T *JEAN* SAYING ANYTHING??
QUIET! ALL O' YE! I CANNAE *HEAR!*
I HAVE TO KEEP THIS CHANNEL OPEN TO RELAY *MEDICAL INFORMATION* TO PROFESSOR XAVIER--
HANK AND *SCOTT--* IT IS UP TO YOU TO TRACK THE *BLACKBIRD--* AND RECOMPUTE THE ENTRY TRAJECTORY!
ALREADY THOUGHT OF THAT! IT'S RUNNING THROUGH THE COMPUTER RIGHT NOW!

THE LIFE SYSTEMS ARE *SPIKING!* WE'RE *LOSING* HIM!
GAMBIT, YOU'RE TAKING OVER FOR ME! PLEASE MONITOR THE METERS *CLOSELY!*
STEPPING OUT FOR A *PROMENADE,* PROFESSEUR?
STEPPING *IN,* MORE APTLY.
IT IS NECESSARY FOR ME TO RE-ENTER *WOLVERINE'S* MIND AND FLATTEN OUT THE BRAIN-WAVE SPIKES!
PLEASE BEAR IN MIND THAT IF LOGAN SHOULD *EXPIRE* WHILE MY CONSCIOUSNESS IS RESIDENT IN HIS MIND...
...THE SHOCK WILL PROVE LETHAL TO *ME,* AS WELL!
CHARLES!
I CAN'T *TAKE* IT! FIRST *ILLYANA,* AND NOW *LOGAN--!*
DON'T YOU GIVE UP ON HIM!
HE WOULD NEVER GIVE UP ON *YOU...*
...HE WOULD NEVER WRITE *YOU* OFF!
IT'S HAPPENING ALL OVER *AGAIN!*
JUST LIKE THE *SHUTTLE* PLUMMETING THROUGH THE *RADIATION STORM...*
...BACK WHEN *JEAN* TURNED INTO *PHOENIX!*

IT'S *WORSE* THAN I IMAGINED.
THE SILENCE VIBRATES WITH THE BRITTLE REVENANTS OF SCREAMS.
...AND BEEN NULLIFIED.
HERE, THE LAME MAY WALK, LEAP AND RUN.
...HERE, THE BLIND MAY SEE WITH ELECTRIC EYES...
...AND RIP WITH CLAWS OF MYTHIC METAL.
THIS IS THE BLOODY SHILOH OF LOGAN'S VITAL ESSENCE.
HERE, IS RE-ENACTED THE PERSONAL RAGNORAK OF A SHATTERED SOUL...
...STAGED WITH ACCUMULATED PROPS AND BAGGAGE OF TRAUMAS PAST.
I'M *COMIN'* FOR YA, *MAGS!*
I'M GONNA *RIP* YER *GUTS* OUT!
HERE, THE PURE LINE OF LOGIC HAS BEEN INTERSECTED BY THE VARIABLE WAVE OF *PAIN*...
SCHRRIKKKK!
I KNOW WHERE YOU *LIVE*...!!

...IT'S THE PLACE WHERE THE *LIGHTNING CONVERGES!*
AHH
OH, LOGAN, LOGAN, LOGAN...
IT ENDS FOR US BOTH, NOW.
OUR LONG ASSOCIATION, MY MOST VISCERAL ENEMY, MY MOST RESPECTED FOE...
...IS OVER!
SO REAL.
THE OZONE SEARS MY NOSTRILS.
THE LINES OF FORCE THAT MOVE *PLANETS* ARE BENT, CHANNELED AND *AMPLIFIED*.
NO.
IT IS *NOT* REAL.
IT IS ONE MAN'S *PERCEPTION*...
...AND I AM WALKING, EVEN *RUNNING* THROUGH IT--
LOGAN!!!
--AND I HAVE *POWER* HERE!

THOOM
I CAN SURRENDER MYSELF TO THIS REALITY AND *AFFECT* IT!
I CAN STOP LOGAN FROM BEING SUCKED INTO THAT *AWFUL LIGHT!*
LET ME *GO,* CHARLIE!
LET ME GO INTO THAT WONDERFUL *WARMTH!*
HEAR THAT *MUSIC?*
IT'S ALL THE VOICES O' EVERYONE I EVER *LOVED,* SINGIN' THE END TO LONELINESS AND SORROW!
IT'S THE BRILLIANT, SHININ' CHORD O' *REDEMPTION!*
AWW, CHARLIE...
...DON'T YA THINK I *KNOW* THAT?
LOGAN! IT'S *DEATH!!*
BRACE YOURSELVES!
WE'RE HITTING A *STORM FRONT!!!*


BISHOP! I'M LOSING THE SKIN ON THE RIGHT WING!
LET IT GO! CONCENTRATE ON PRESERVING THE STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY OF THE AIR FRAME!
SCHOOOOOM!
WE HAVE TO LEVEL THE SHIP OUT MANUALLY!
WHAT NOW, BISHOP?
GAMBIT!
I NEED YOUR HELP!
...UN PIECE DE GATEAU!
I'M GLAD YOU THINK SO!
FAPP!
FOOM!
TE BILE PAS, MEC!*
* DON'T SWEAT IT! --FRANCOPHILE BOB.
THE POWER ASSISTS TO THE MAIN FLIGHT CONTROLS JUST DIED!
EVERYTHING THAT ISN'T STRAPPED DOWN...
THAT WAS THE MAIN HATCH!!
THE CABIN IS GOING TO DE-PRESSURIZE!!
BA-DOOOOM!

"...IS GOING TO GET SUCKED OUT!"
GOODBYE, CHARLIE!
THE LIGHT IS CALLIN' ME--
... THE LIGHT!
WHO...?
I KNOW YOU...
...ILLYANA!
I'M READY TO GO, DARLIN'--
--WHU?
DON'T PUSH ME AWAY, DARLIN'--!
DON'T--!

JEAN! FORGET ABOUT THE WING AND SECURE THE HATCH!
WHAT HAPPENED TO LOGAN, PROFESSOR?
THERE'S NOTHING MORE I CAN DO FOR HIM!
WHY DID YOU COME OUT OF HIS MIND? IS HE --
CONCENTRATE ON THE HATCH, JEAN!
I NEED A SITUATION REPORT!
JEAN HELD THAT OL' WING TOGETHER LONG ENOUGH!
WE'VE GOT THE AIRSPEED DOWN TO BELOW THE RESONATIN' LEVEL!
THE WING WON'T SHAKE ITSELF APART ANYMORE ...
... NOW, ALL JEAN HAS TO WORRY ABOUT IS THE HATCH!
THE HATCH IS NOT GOING TO MOVE!!
I'M NOT GOING TO LET IT!!
OH, LORD -- HE'S GOING INTO CARDIAC ARREST!
PULMONARY STIMULATION IS INEFFECTIVE!
VITAL SIGNS GRAPHS ARE FADING!!

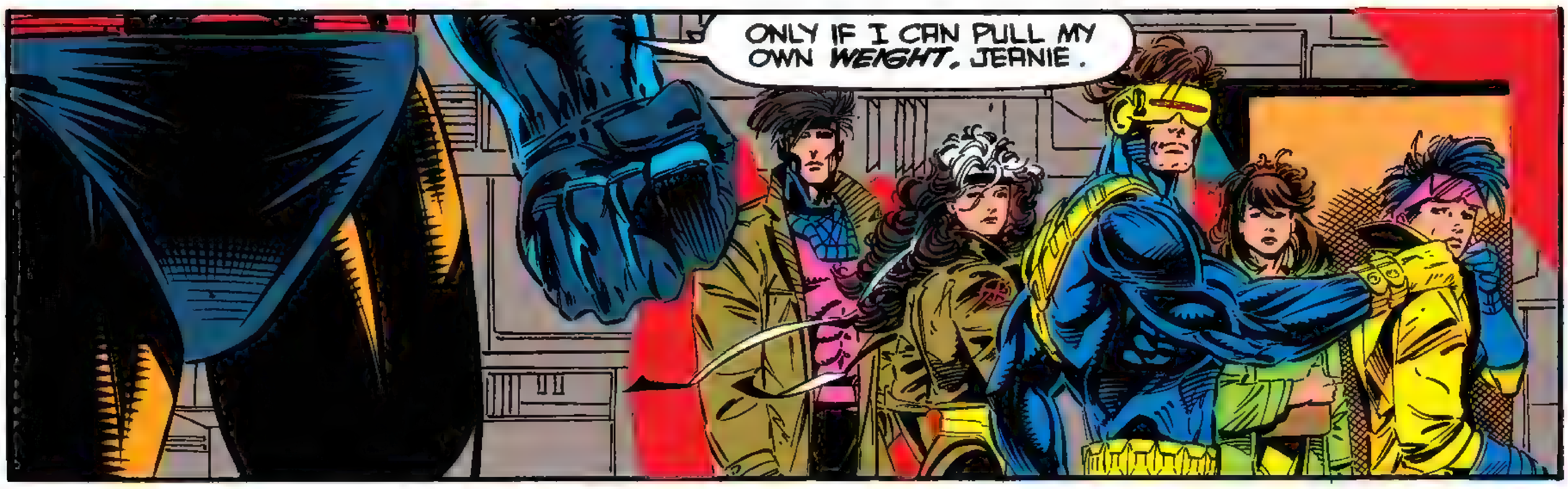
"SOMEBODY COMPUTE OUR COURSE INTERSECT WITH THE METEORLOGICAL UPDATE!
"GOT A READ-OUT, BISHOP...
"...WE'RE HEADIN' SMACK DAB INTO THE HEART OF ONE RIP-SNORTER OF AN *ELECTRICAL STORM!*"
"*LIGHTNING* CAN'T REALLY *HARM* US--
KRDAAAKK!
THOOM!
"--UNLESS IT SERVES TO BREAK SOMEONE'S *CONCENTRATION!*"
IT *SLIPPED*-- AND I *LOST* IT!!!
I NEED TO *REPLACE* THE *HATCH...!*
...BUT WITH *WHAT??*
I CAN'T MAINTAIN *CONTROL* BY *MYSELF!!*
CAN'T HOLD ON!!
HELP ME, *REMY!*

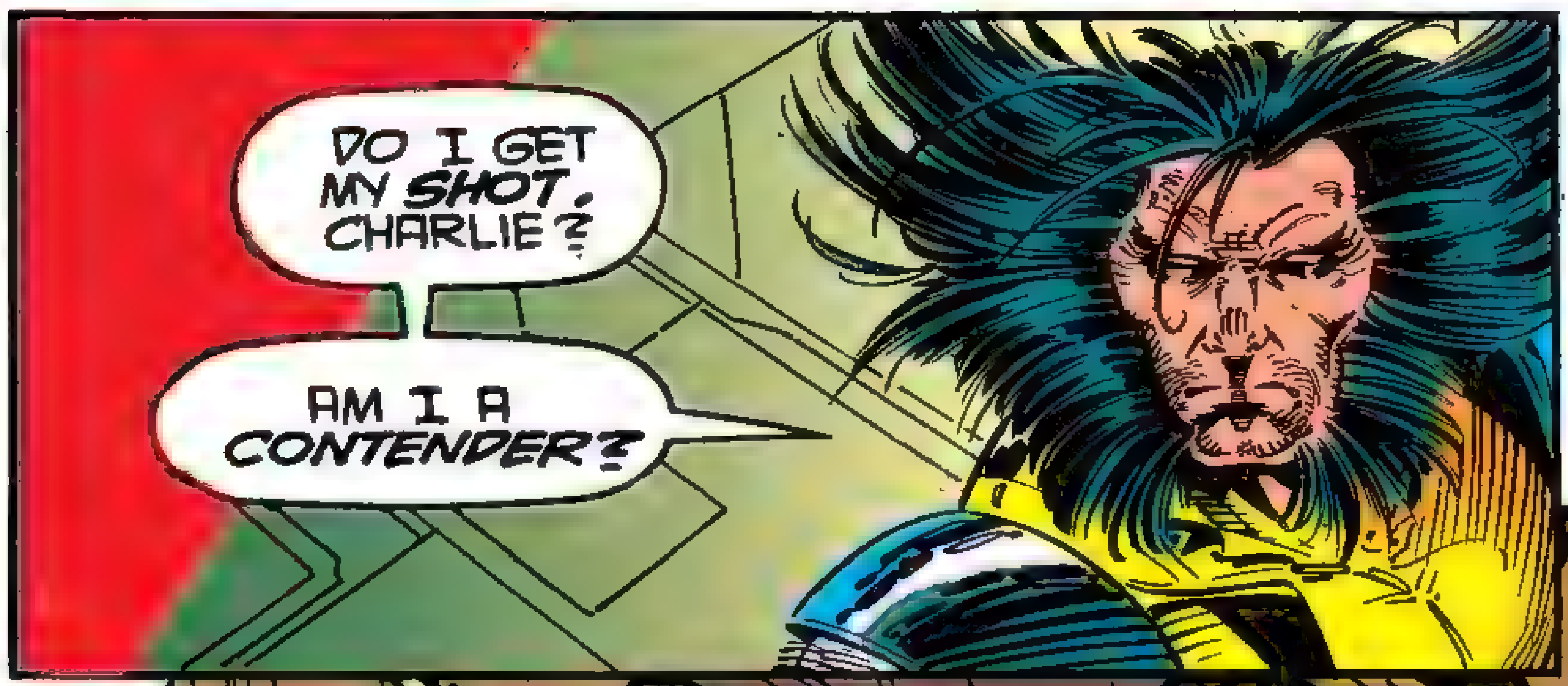
WATCH OUT, JEAN! GAMBIT AND ROGUE ARE BEING SUCKED OUT TOWARDS THE HATCH!
NO! I'M NOT GOING TO LET IT HAPPEN!
CAN'T GO INTO THE LIGHT!
GOTTA GO BACK!
BUT, HOW?
GET BACK UP TO THE CONTROLS! I'M USING ALL MY PSI-STRENGTH TO PUSH YOU BACK UP THERE!
GET THE BLACKBIRD UNDER CONTROL!
JEAN!
DON'T LOOK BACK!
SAVE THE OTHERS!
HOW DO I PULL MYSELF BACK?
AM I OUT HERE ALL ALONE?
JEEEEEEAN!!
JEAN!
JEAN!

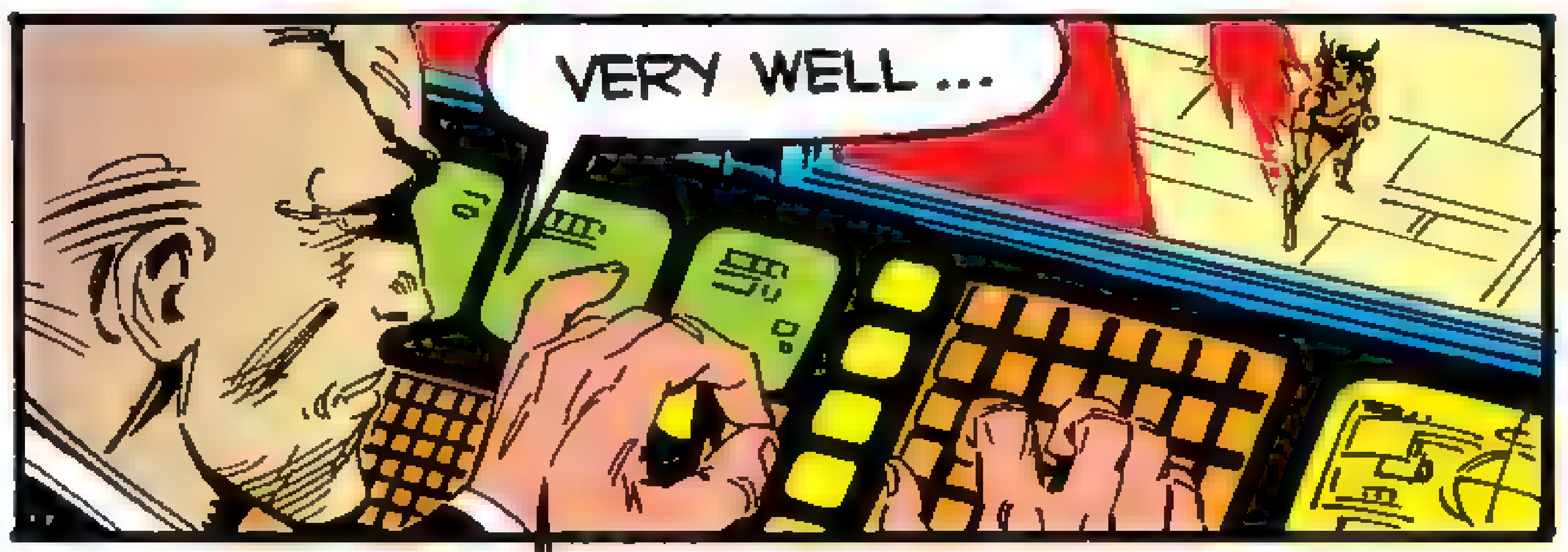
OHH, JEAN ...
SOMEBODY'S *CALLIN'* FOR YA, JEAN ...
--IS THAT *ME?*
AM I CALLIN' YOU, JEAN?
I NEED YOUR *HELP.*
CAN YOU HEAR ME, DARLIN'?
GIVE ME YOUR *HAND,* JEAN.
BRING ME --

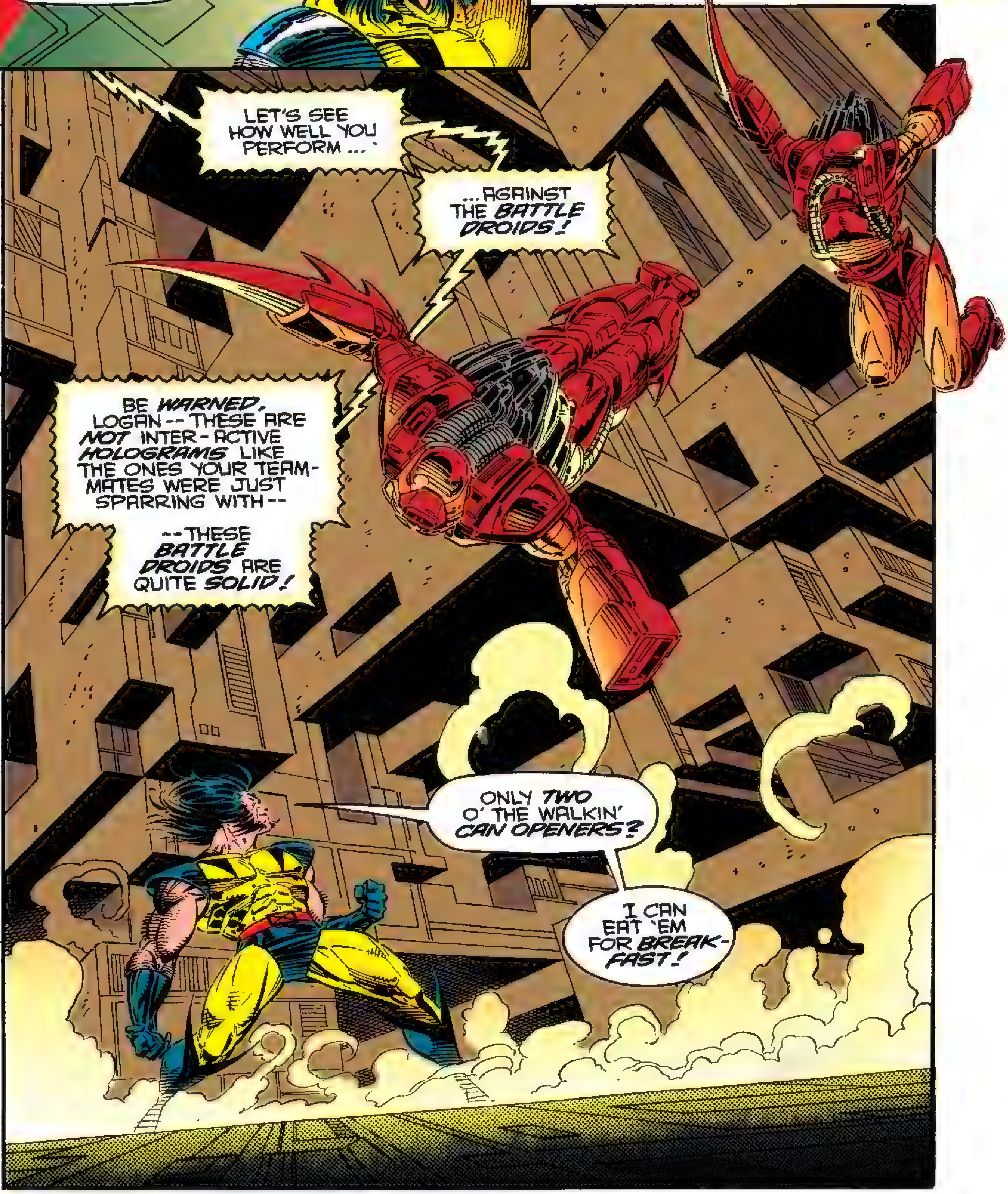
...BACK!
LOGAN!
WE THOUGHT YOU WERE--
PROFESSOR XAVIER SAID YOU WERE--
I COULDN'T LET IT HAPPEN TO YOU AGAIN, DARLIN'!
LOGAN, YOUR LIFE-GRAPHS HAD **BOTTOMED OUT** ON THE **MEDI-UNIT** SCANNERS...
...Y-YOU CAME BACK--? FOR **ME**.
YOU GOT IT THE OTHER WAY AROUND, JEAN...
...IT WAS **YOU** WHO REACHED OUT AND TOOK MY HAND.

TIME
HEALS
ALL
WOUNDS
YE'RE NAE GOIN' IN THERE...!
...AS YOUR PHYSICIAN, I CANNAE ABIDE IT!
WITH YOUR HEALING FACTOR SO WEAKENED AND YOUR BONES LEECHED O' THEIR ADAMANTIUM...
...THERE'S NAE TELLIN' WHAT HORRIBLE AND PERMANENT INJURY YE CAN INFLICT UPON YOUR THICK HEAD IN THE DANGER ROOM! IT'S ONLY BEEN TWO WEEKS, MAN. YE'VE GOT TO GIVE YE'SELF TIME!
I APPRECIATE YOUR CONCERN, MOIRA...
...BUT I NEED TO PROVE THAT I STILL DESERVE A PLACE ON THE TEAM--
YOU'LL ALWAYS HAVE A PLACE WITH THE X-MEN-- DON'T YOU KNOW THAT BY NOW?
YEAH.
SOME, BETTER THAN OTHERS.


ONLY IF I CAN PULL MY OWN *WEIGHT*, JEANIE.


DO I GET MY *SHOT*, CHARLIE?
AM I A *CONTENDER?*

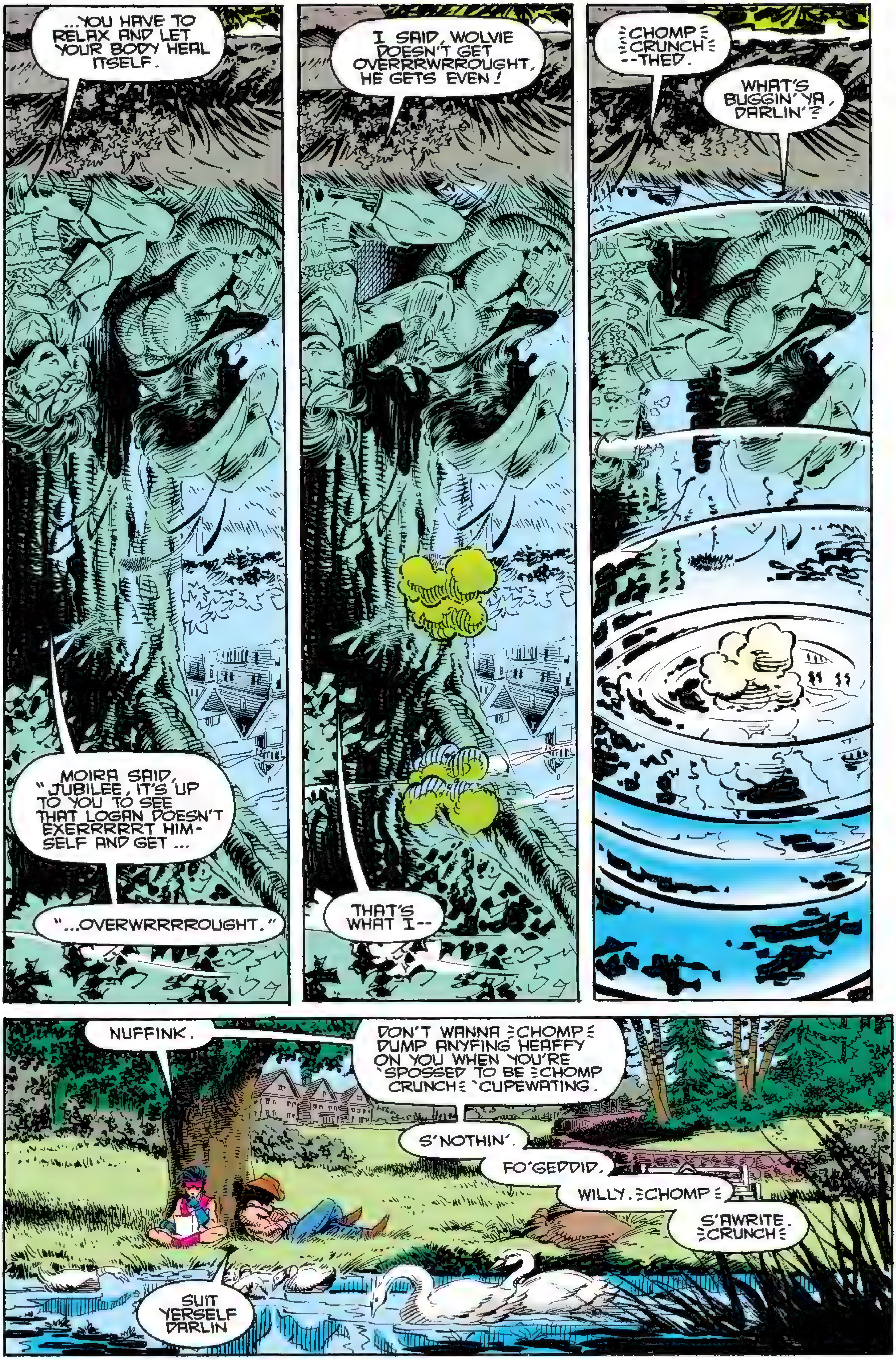

VERY WELL...


LET'S SEE HOW WELL YOU PERFORM...
...AGAINST THE *BATTLE DROIDS!*
BE *WARNED*, LOGAN -- THESE ARE *NOT* INTER-ACTIVE *HOLOGRAMS* LIKE THE ONES YOUR TEAM-MATES WERE JUST SPARRING WITH --
-- THESE *BATTLE DROIDS* ARE QUITE *SOLID!*
ONLY *TWO* O' THE WALKIN' *CAN OPENERS?*
I CAN EAT 'EM FOR *BREAKFAST!*

SCHRAACKK!
H-HE BARELY GOT OUT OF THE WAY IN *TIME*!
THAT *LOOK* ON HIS FACE-- IT WAS--
--FEAR.
THOOMP
YOU HAVE TO PUT A *STOP* TO THIS, CHARLES--
NO, MOIRA. I CANNOT. LOGAN HAS TO KNOW THIS ABOUT HIMSELF...
"...HE HAS TO *EXPERIENCE* IT."
ZZZACK!
THOOM!
UNNNGH!

FWAMMMMM!
THAT'S ENOUGH!
GET HIM OUT OF THERE!
HASN'T HE SUFFERED ENOUGH?
OH, WOLVIE--!
HE DON'T GIVE UP, THIS ONE! C'EST HOMME EST UN LION!
HE'S GETTING UP--
LOGAN, IT'S UP TO YOU...
...SHALL I TERMINATE THE EXERCISE?
I'M JUST GETTIN' WARMED UP, CHARLIE!
THESE PILES O' SCRAP METAL AND CIRCUIT BOARDS AIN'T GOT NOTHIN' ON THE OL' CANUCKLEHEAD!
TURN IT OFF, PROFESSOR!
DON'T LISTEN TO HER, CHARLIE--
I MAY BE DOWN, BUT I AIN'T OUT AND I'M STILL--
--THE BEST AT WHAT I DO!
SCHUKK
OCH!!!
MY GOD.

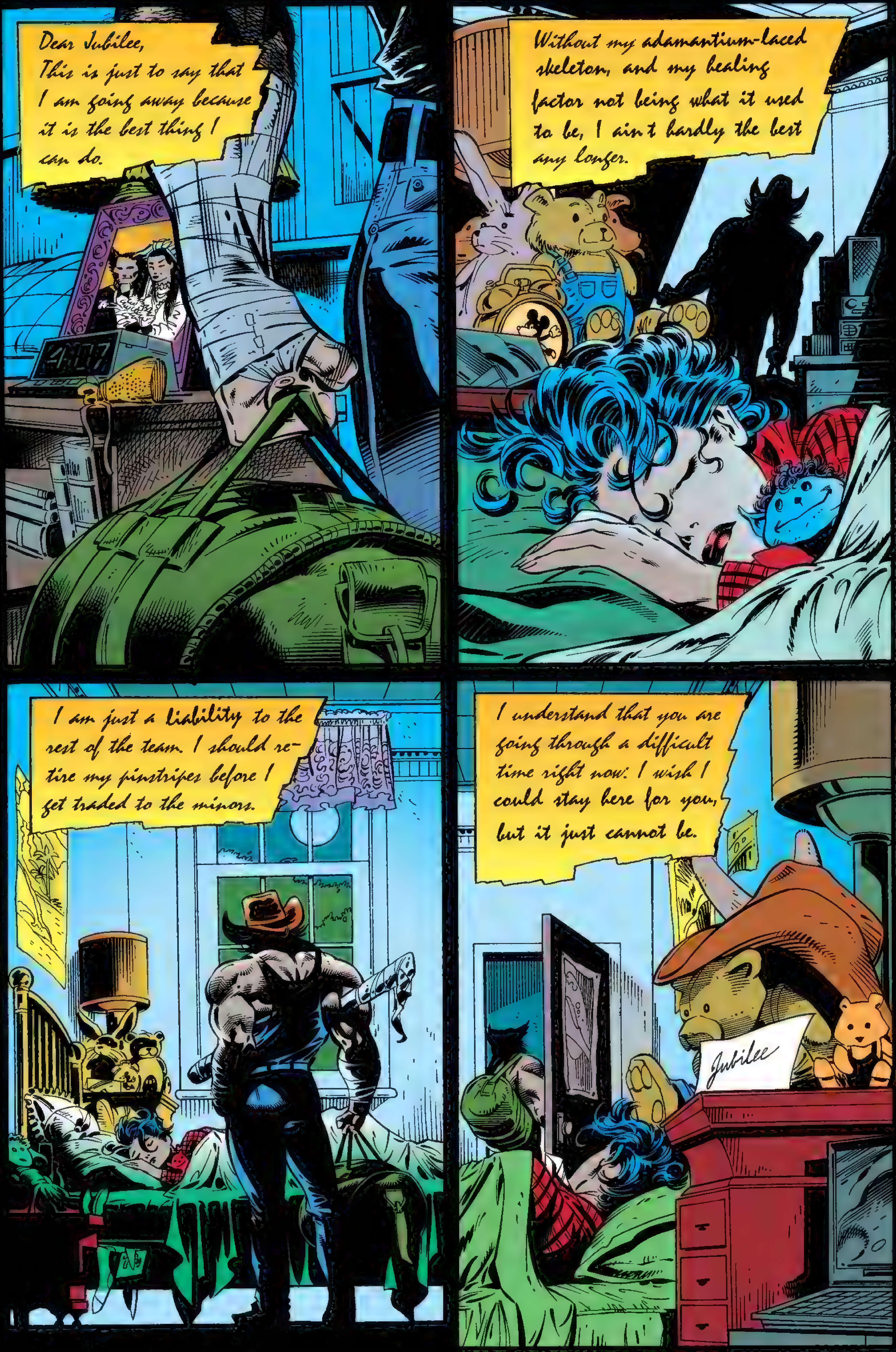
AAARRRGCHH
--HIS CLAWS--
--THEY'RE BONE!!? HOW CAN THAT BE!?
GET DOWN THERE!
GET HIM TO RETRACT THEM!
--STOP THE BLEEDING!
SHUT DOWN THOSE BATTLE DROIDS!
WOLVIE!!!
OCH! I NEED THE MEDI-CART!
I SHOULD HAVE SUSPECTED--!
NUMBER TWO SUTURES!
OF COURSE! IF THE ADAMANTIUM WAS LEECHED--
--COAGULANT!
--WHAT ABOUT HIS HEALING FACTOR!?
--AND TWO UNITS OF WHOLE BLOOD!
WHEEL IN THE AUTO-CLAVE!
HIS HEALING FACTOR USED TO CLOSE THE WOUNDS!
YOU MEAN, EVERY TIME HE--
WOLLLLVIE!
GET OUTTA MY WAY! I GOTTA GO TO HIM!!!!

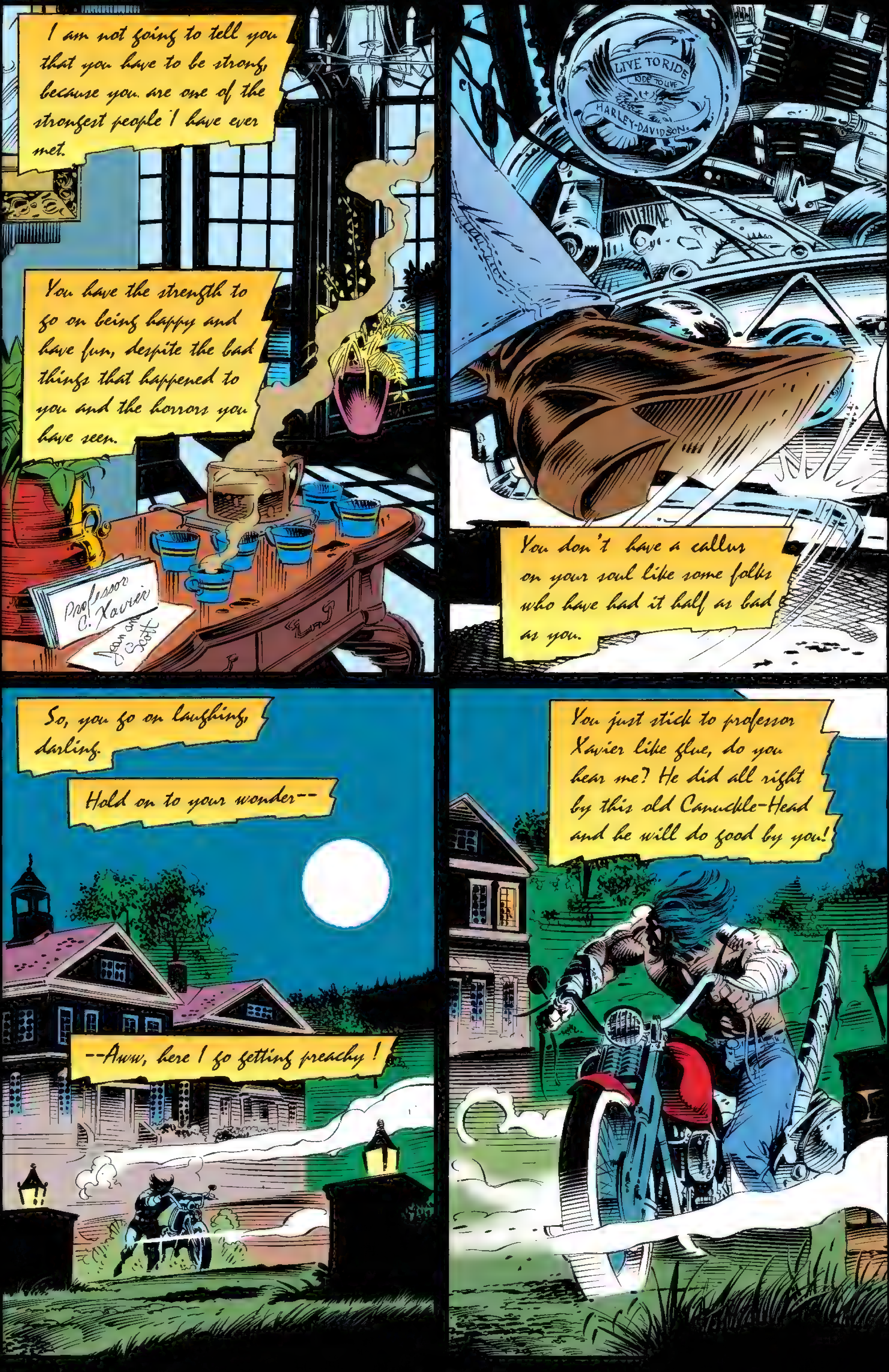

...YOU HAVE TO RELAX AND LET YOUR BODY HEAL ITSELF.
MOIRA SAID, "JUBILEE, IT'S UP TO YOU TO SEE THAT LOGAN DOESN'T EXERRRRRT HIMSELF AND GET ...
"...OVERWRRRROUGHT."
I SAID, WOLVIE DOESN'T GET OVERRRWRROUGHT, HE GETS EVEN!
THAT'S WHAT I--
⁝CHOMP⁝ ⁝CRUNCH⁝ --THED.
WHAT'S BUGGIN' YA, DARLIN'?
NUFFINK.
DON'T WANNA ⁝CHOMP⁝ DUMP ANYFING HEAFFY ON YOU WHEN YOU'RE 'SPOSSED TO BE ⁝CHOMP CRUNCH⁝ 'CUPEWATING.
S'NOTHIN'.
FO'GEDDID.
WILLY. ⁝CHOMP⁝
S'AWRITE. ⁝CRUNCH⁝
SUIT YERSELF DARLIN

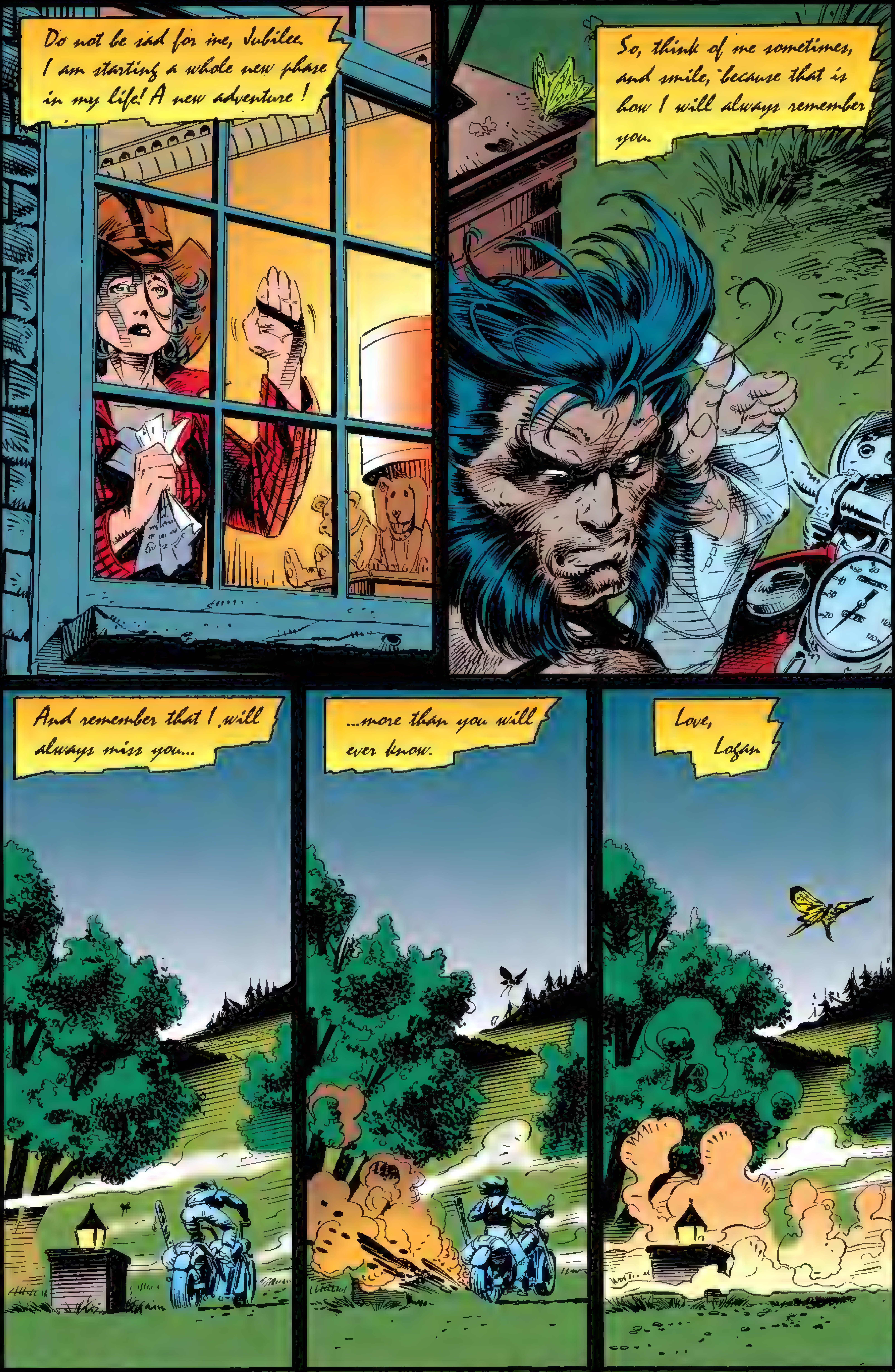
CHOMP CRUNCH
CHOMP CRUNCH
PAF!
HUH?
WHAT WAS *THAT* FER???
I CAN *CONTROL* MY *PAFS* BETTER NOW.
IF I *PLACE* THEM JUST *RIGHT* AND JUICE THEM UP TO THE *MAX*, I CAN DO A LOT OF *DAMAGE*...
...EVEN *KILL*.
I NEVER THOUGHT THAT MY *HATE* FOR THOSE TWO CREEPS WHO KILLED MY PARENTS COULD AMPLIFY MY POWERS ... *
...IT WAS LIKE WAKING UP WITH A *LOADED GUN* IN MY HAND!
*SEE ISSUE #73
SCHLIKK!
AND YA CHOSE THE OL' *CANUCKLE-HEAD* TO HAVE A HEART-TO-HEART WITH ABOUT IT?
DARLIN', THERE'S THINGS ABOUT *MYSELF* I AIN'T GOT *CLUE ONE* ABOUT ...

...LIKE, IF THESE *CLAWS* O' MINE ARE *BONE*--
--THEN, I MUST'VE BEEN *BORN* WITH 'EM!
HOW COME I CAN'T REMEMBER THEM BEFORE THEY WAS BONDED WITH *ADAMANTIUM?* HOW COME I ALWAYS *THOUGHT* THEY WERE IMPLANTS?
SHUKK!
HOW CAN YOUR HANDS *HEAL* IF YOU KEEP--?
I POP 'EM OUT A FEW TIMES A DAY NOW.
KEEPS THE CHANNEL OPEN.
LIKE PIERCED EARS.
SO IT STOPPED HURTING?
NOPE.
OH.
I GUESS *MY* PROBLEMS AREN'T VERY IMPORTANT COMPARED TO--
THEY ARE TO *ME*, DARLIN'.
BEFORE I CAME TO THIS PLACE, I WAS LIKE WALKIN' IN A RED HAZE ALL THE TIME.
THERE WAS STUFF ROLLIN' AROUND INSIDE O' ME, I DON'T KNOW *WHAT* IT WAS OR WHERE IT CAME FROM, AND I WAS *ANGRY* ALL THE TIME, LIKE SOME HUNGRY, HURT ANIMAL STALKIN' THROUGH THE WOODS...

...THEN I CAME TO SALEM CENTER--
--AND IT WAS LIKE COMIN' HOME.
'CAUSE HOME IS WHERE YA DON'T HAVE TO EXPLAIN YOURSELF, 'CAUSE EVERYBODY *KNOWS* WHAT YOU'RE ALL ABOUT.
ALL US MOTHERLESS CHILDREN WANDERIN' THROUGH THE STORM, AND ALL OF A SUDDEN THERE'S A LIGHT IN A WINDOW AN' SOMEBODY TO TAKE US IN AND CLOSE THE DOOR AGAINST THE WIND.
OL' CHARLIE XAVIER.
YOU STICK WITH THE *PROFESSOR*, DARLIN'. HE CAN HELP YOU DEAL WITH YOUR POWERS.
HE CAN SHOW YOU HOW TO LIVE WITH IT. TO HAVE *MEANIN'.* THAT'S THE TICKET.
YOU GOT A LIGHT, DARLIN'?
PAF!
FOOOT!
WHAT ABOUT *YOU*, WOLVIE? YOU SOUND LIKE YOU'RE NOT GONNA BE AROUND TO HELP ME OUT...
PUFF PUFF PUFF PUFF
GACK! KOF KOF HACKKKK!
YOU STICK WITH CHARLIE XAVIER, AND HE'LL SET YOU STRAIGHT.
GACK! TIME I QUIT THESE NASTY OL' THINGS, ANYWAY!


Dear Jubilee,
This is just to say that I am going away because it is the best thing I can do.
Without my adamantium-laced skeleton, and my healing factor not being what it used to be, I ain't hardly the best any longer.
I am just a liability to the rest of the team. I should retire my pinstripes before I get traded to the minors.
I understand that you are going through a difficult time right now. I wish I could stay here for you, but it just cannot be.
Jubilee


I am not going to tell you that you have to be strong, because you are one of the strongest people I have ever met.
You have the strength to go on being happy and have fun, despite the bad things that happened to you and the horrors you have seen.
Professor C. Xavier
Jean and Scott
LIVE TO RIDE
RIDE TO LIVE
HARLEY-DAVIDSON
You don't have a callus on your soul like some folks who have had it half as bad as you.
So, you go on laughing, darling.
Hold on to your wonder--
--Aww, here I go getting preachy!
You just stick to professor Xavier like glue, do you hear me? He did all right by this old Canuckle-Head and he will do good by you!


Do not be sad for me, Jubilee. I am starting a whole new phase in my life! A new adventure!
So, think of me sometimes, and smile, because that is how I will always remember you.
And remember that I will always miss you...
...more than you will ever know.
Love, Logan

EPTING
PALMER

MAGNETO #0 PINUP BY STEVE EPTING, TOM PALMER & CARLOS LOPEZ

X-MEN® SURVIVAL GUIDE TO THE MANSION™

Andy Kubert

LONGITUDINAL SECTION A-A

Dear Student,

Welcome to the Xavier Institute for Higher Learning. This is the home, the training center – the very foundation – of the X-Men.

In practice, we are a relative handful of mutants dedicated to fighting on the behalf of a world that often fears and hates us. It would be dishonest if I did not concede the truth that relations between humans and mutantkind have been deteriorating over the past decade. For every mutant who is accepted into this group or appointed to the United States government's X-Factor program, another makes the evening news with a campaign of terror designed to enslave humanity or – as is often the case -- wipe the human race off the face of the Earth.

So why do we do it -- why do we dare to dream a dream of a better world? Why are we willing to sacrifice any semblance of a "normal" life to make that dream a reality? Why do we seek, against seemingly impossible odds, to change a cold, often indifferent society into one that is a better place, a better more tolerant place?

Because underneath the uniforms, behind the code names, and despite the genetic anomalies the rest of the world would call our "powers," there is no fundamental difference between us and those we seek to protect. Because despite the divisive ethnic slurs designed to separate and belittle us, we are – each and every one of us – humans.

Gifted humans.

Misunderstood humans.

Hunted and persecuted humans.

But humans nonetheless. And as humans I believe we have a responsibility to shepherd the change. A change where all the branches of humanity live together as one.

Some would say this is a naive dream. Or even a fool's quest. Perhaps. But I say, it is our only hope if we are all to survive.

Apparently you believe it too.

So welcome, X-Men both old and new.

Welcome to the dream.

Charles Xavier, PHD

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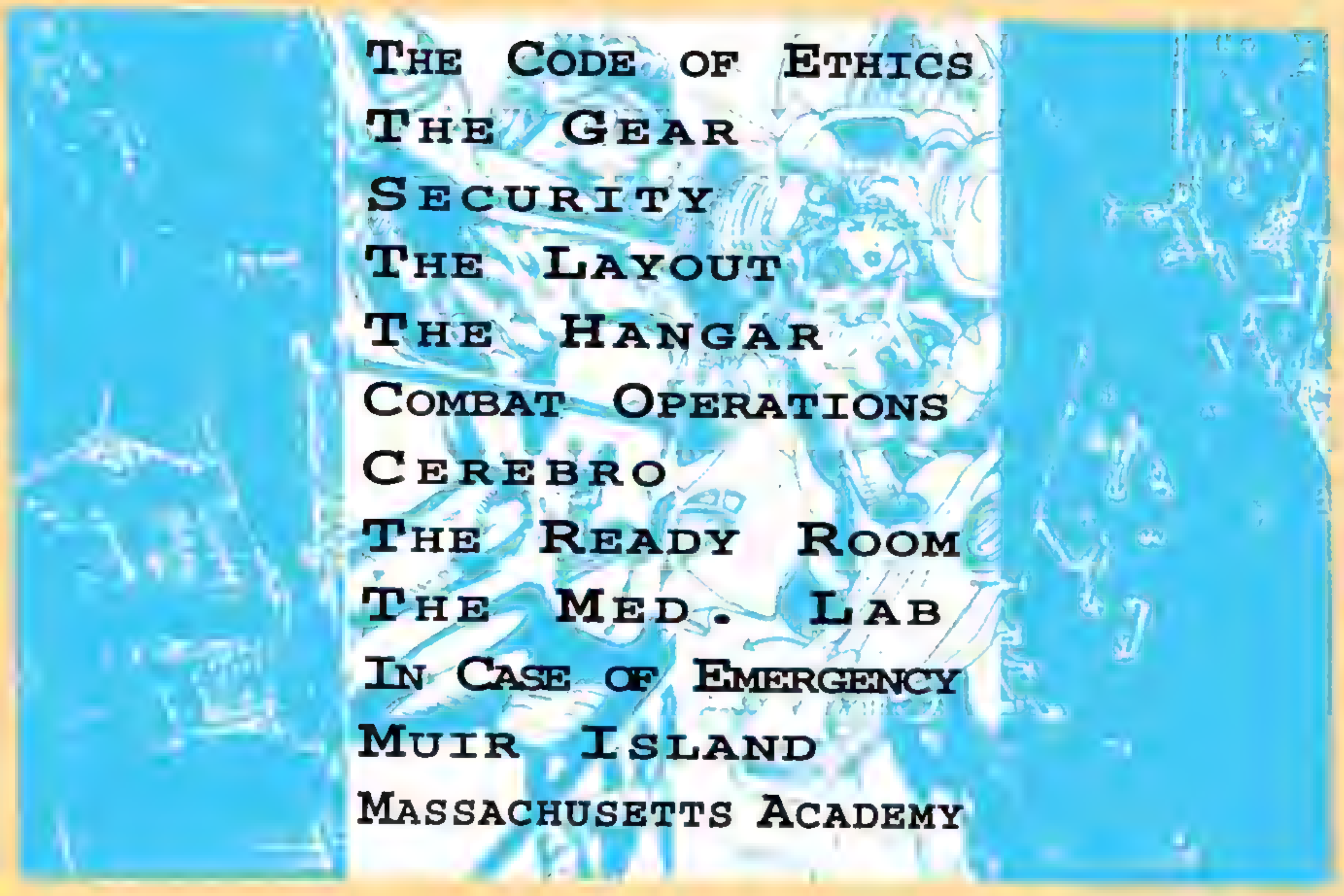

The Code of Ethics
The Gear
Security
The Layout
The Hangar
Combat Operations
Cerebro
The Ready Room
The Med. Lab
In Case of Emergency
Muir Island
Massachusetts Academy

ARTISTS:
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(2-5,10-12,20,21,23,25,28-30,36-42,46,48-54)

ELIOT BROWN
(6,7,12-15,17-19,22,24,26,27,30-35,39,42-45,52)

KRIS RENKOWITZ/MICHAEL GOLDEN (8)
HENRY FLINT (40,41) WHILCE PORTACIO (9)
GREG CAPULLO/ HARRY CANDELARIO (9)
BRANDON PETERSON (47) STEVE ALEXANDROV (7)
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(COVER)
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EDITOR/DESIGNER: SUZANNE GAFFNEY
GROUP EDITOR: BOB HARRAS
EDITOR IN CHIEF: TOM DEFALCO

code OF ETHICS

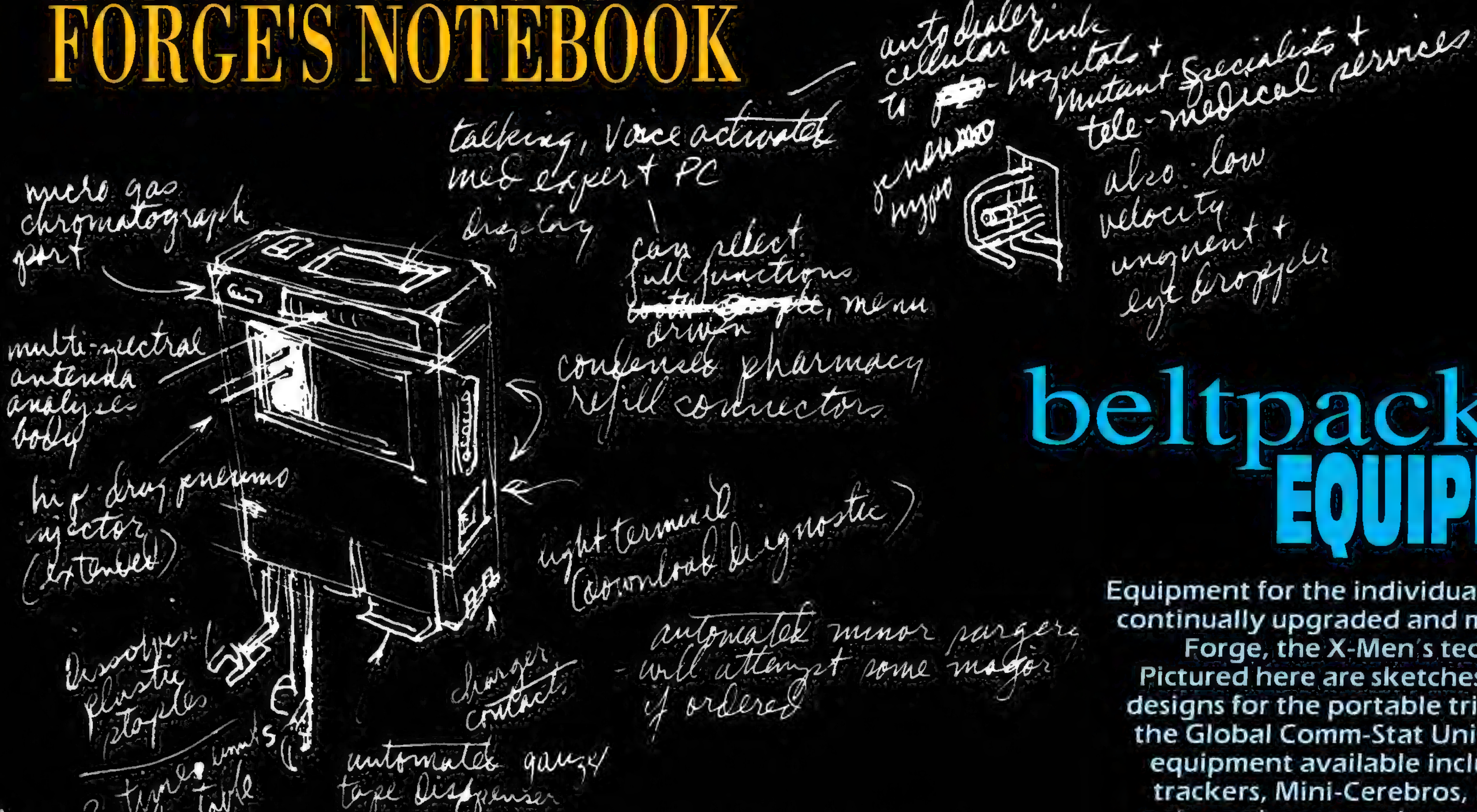
Before we, who assume the role of X-Men, can hope to reach our full potential, it is important to understand exactly who we are...what we hope to accomplish.

First and foremost we are mutants—a breed of individuals who have found themselves existing on humanity's next evolutionary plateau. Born with the genetic capacity for great power, we have chosen to assume the added burden of responsibility, to defend those who have not the power or resources to protect themselves. At times this will mean coming to the aid of humans—providing a defense against those mutants who feel their powers allow them to dominate others. Just as often, we will be called on to safeguard mutants against the humans who fear and hate them simply because they are "different." All too often, we will defend mutants against their own kind—as the unfortunate quest for supremacy continues.

We are architects of the future—dedicated to constructing a bridge between the human and mutant population that shares this world. We are pathfinders—embarked on a journey to enlightenment and tolerance between two races that have more in common than either realizes. We are explorers—booking passage to a place where every living being co-exists in peace with every other.

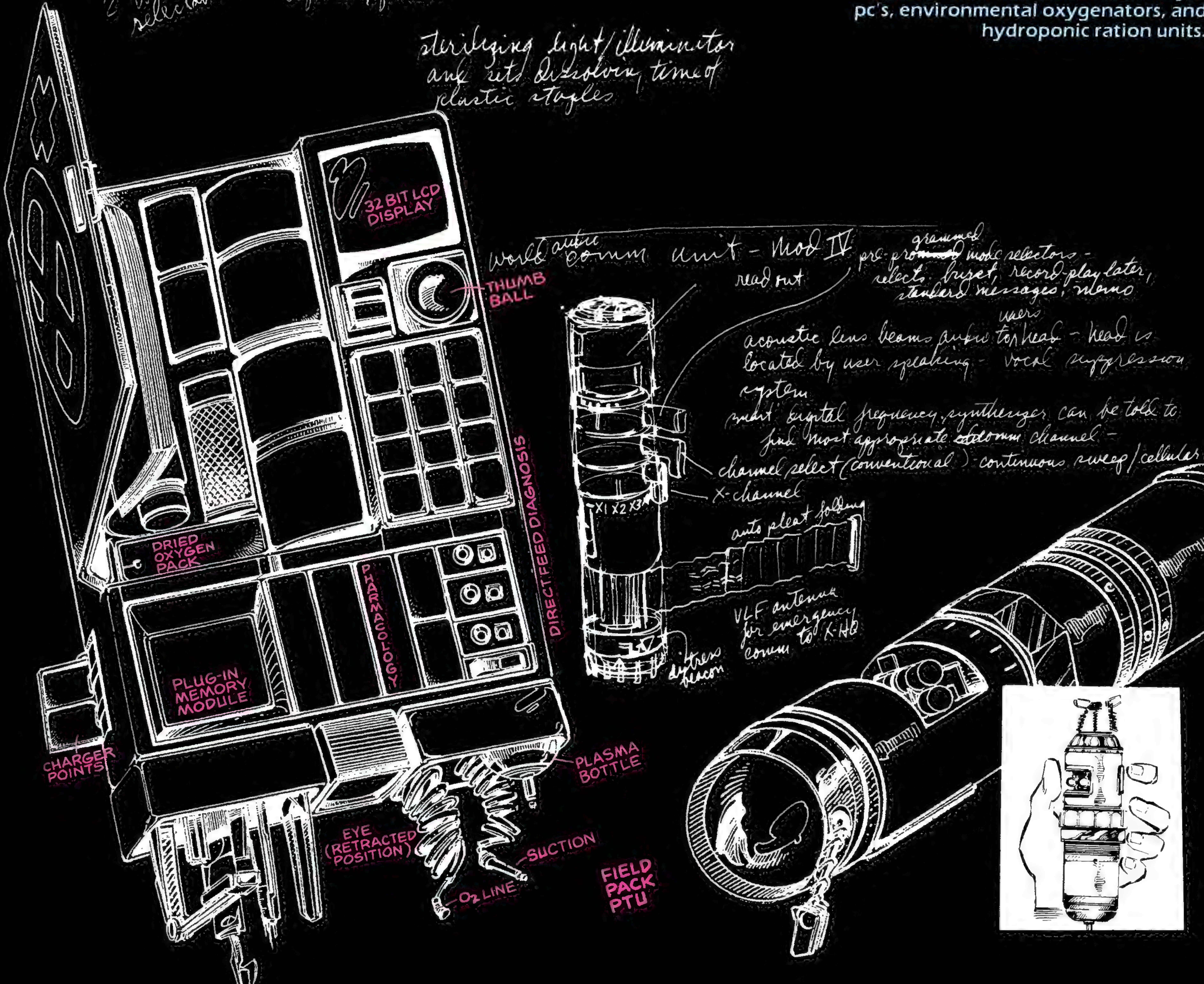
Above all else, we believe every sentient entity is capable of change—indeed, mutants themselves are the product of the ultimate change, evolution. To this end, we are compelled to open our doors—our very hearts—to all those who come to us for help.

FROM THE PAGES OF
FORGE'S NOTEBOOK

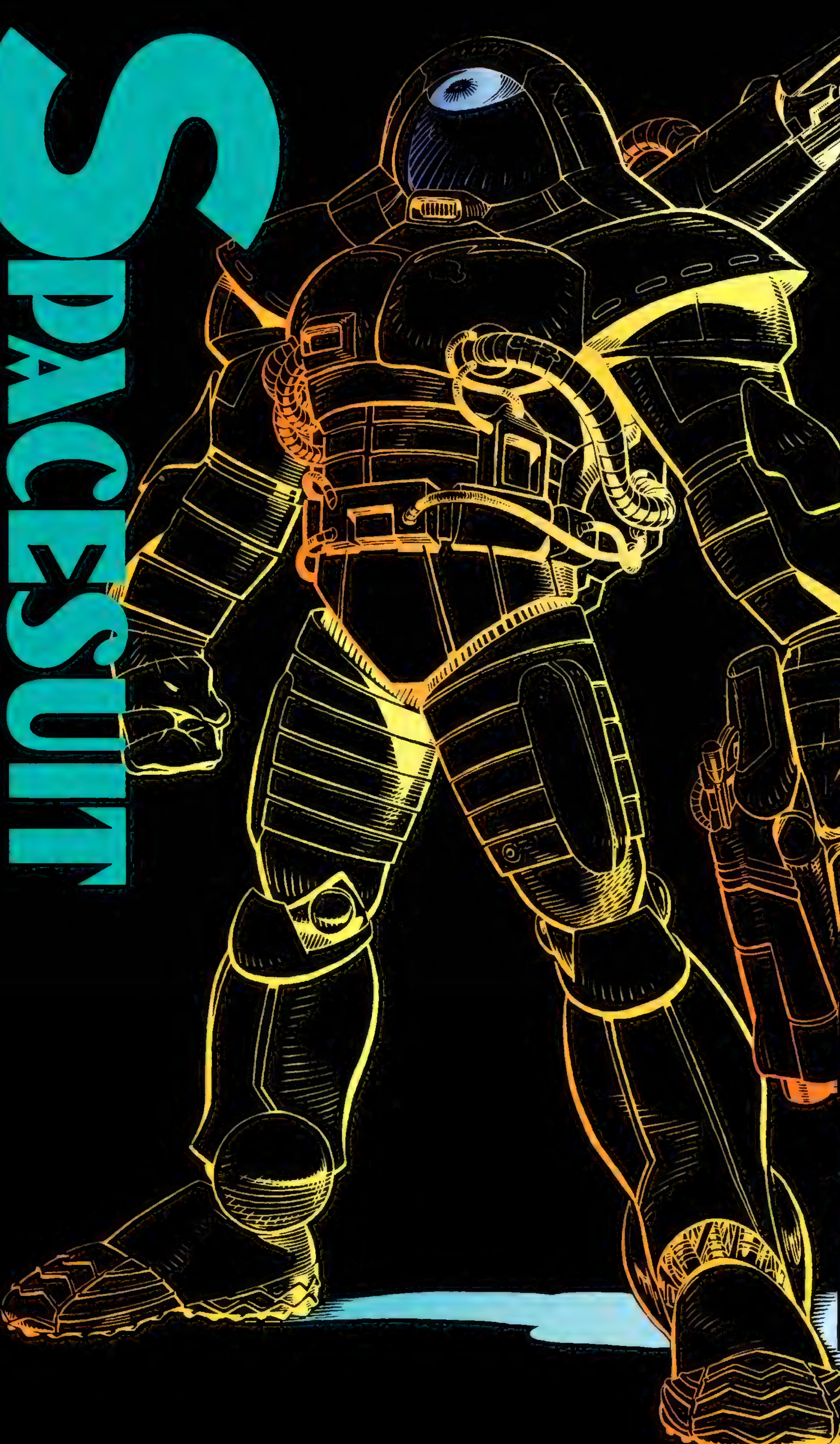

auto dialer cellular link to ~~[illegible]~~ hospitals + mutant Specialists + tele-medical services
~~[illegible]~~ pneumo hypo
also low velocity unguent + eye droppeler
talking, Voice activated med expert + PC
display
can select full functions ~~[illegible]~~, menu driven
condensed pharmacy refill connectors
micro gas chromatograph port
multi-spectral antenna analyses body
hi-g drug pneumo injector (extended)
light terminal (download diagnostic)
dissolving plastic staples
charger contacts
automated minor surgery - will attempt some major if ordered
2 time limits selectable
automated gauze tape dispenser

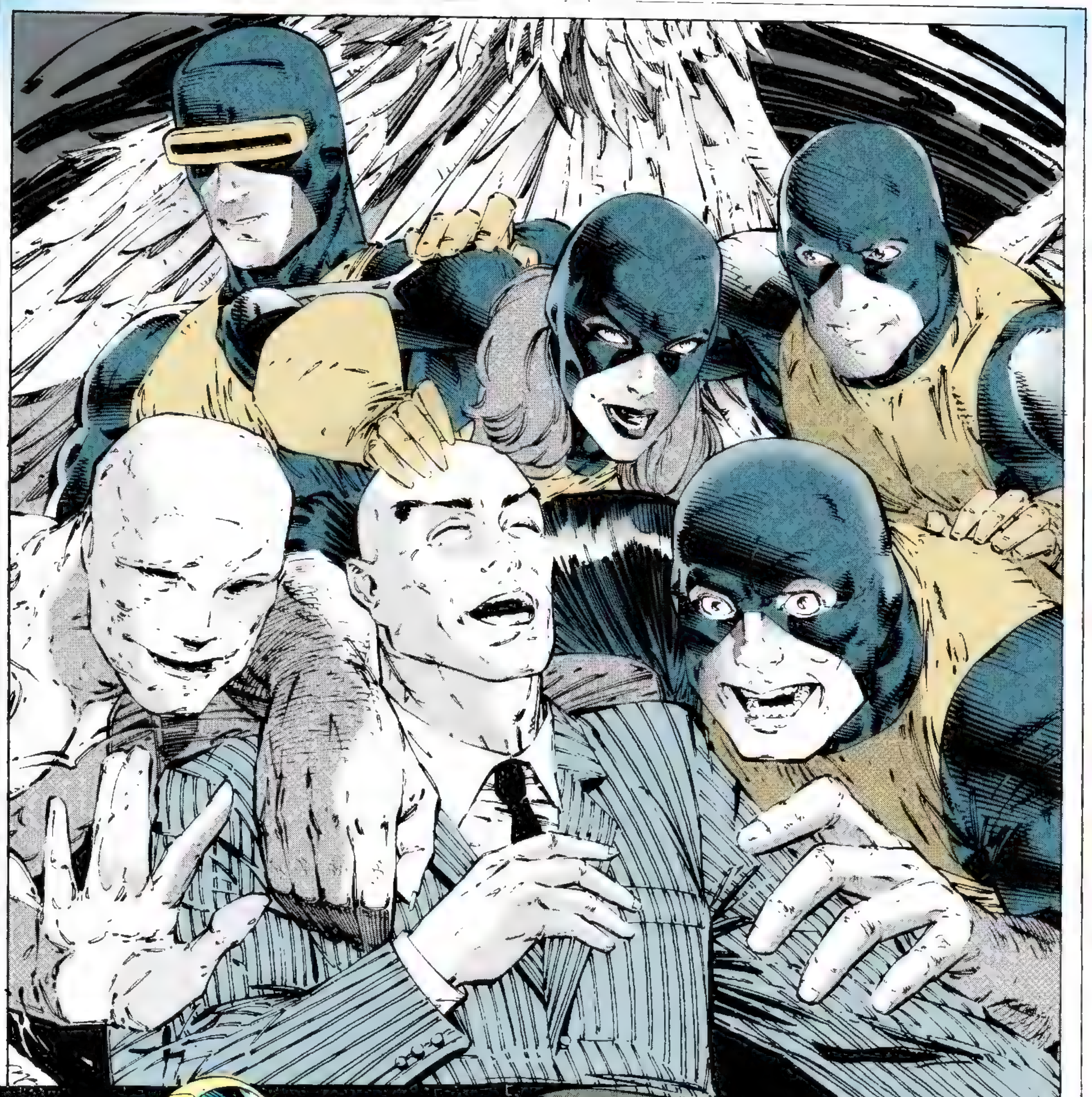
beltpack
EQUIPMENT

Equipment for the individual beltpacks is continually upgraded and monitored by Forge, the X-Men's techno-futurist. Pictured here are sketches and current designs for the portable triage unit and the Global Comm-Stat Unit. Additional equipment available includes biogen-trackers, Mini-Cerebros, 200 terabyte pc's, environmental oxygenators, and hydroponic ration units.

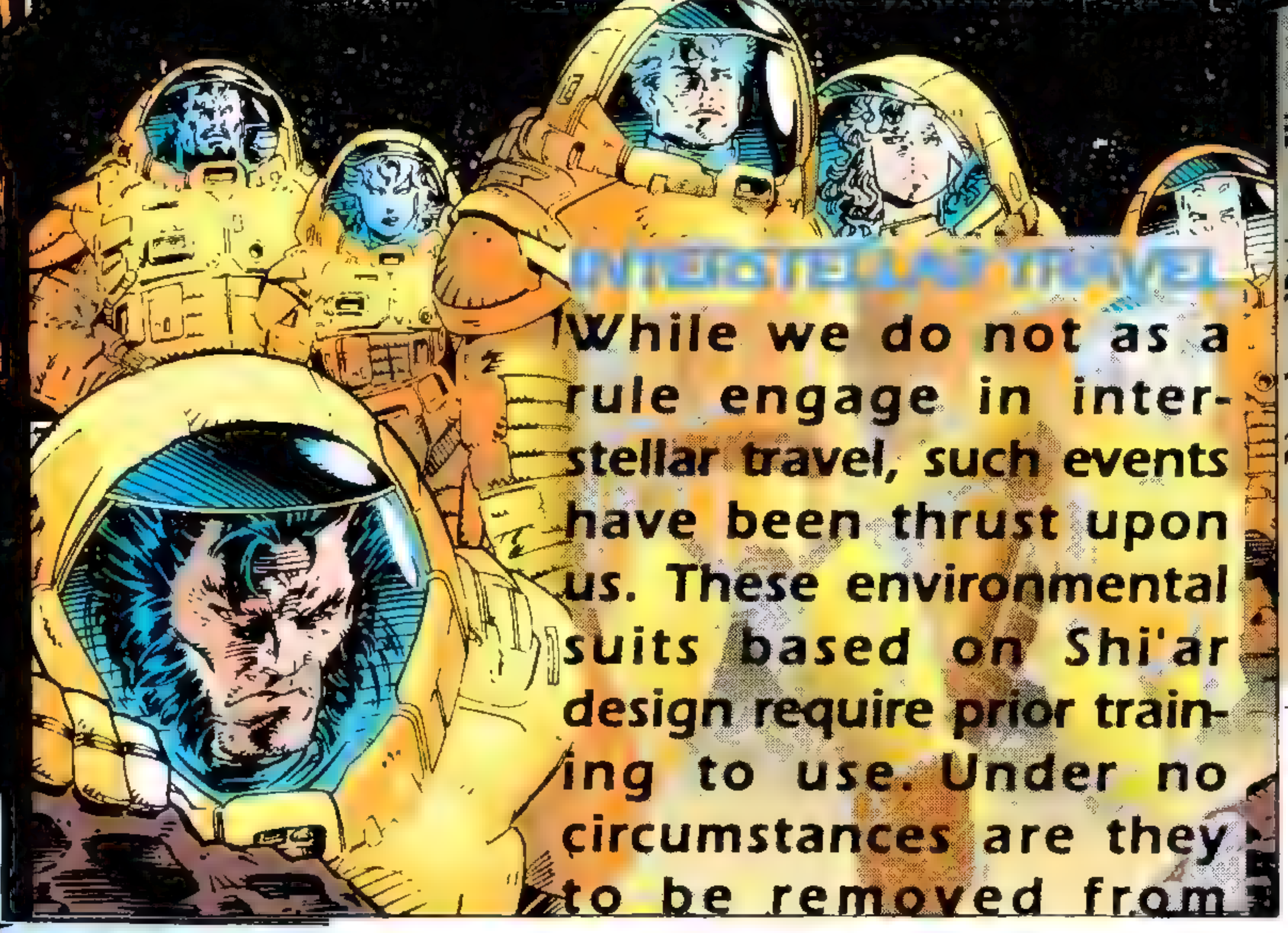

sterilizing light/illuminator and sets dissolving time of plastic staples
32 BIT LCD DISPLAY
THUMB BALL
DRIED OXYGEN PACK
PHARMACOLOGY
DIRECT FEED DIAGNOSIS
PLUG-IN MEMORY MODULE
CHARGER POINTS
PLASMA BOTTLE
EYE (RETRACTED POSITION)
SUCTION
O2 LINE
FIELD PACK PTU
world audio comm unit - Mod IV
read out
pre-programmed mode selectors - selects, burst, record-play later, standard messages, memo
acoustic lens beams audio to users head - head is located by user speaking - vocal suppression system
smart digital frequency synthesizer can be told to find most appropriate comm channel -
channel select (conventional) - continuous sweep/cellular
X-channel
X1 X2 X3
auto pleat folding
VLF antenna for emergency comm to X-HQ
distress beacon

SPACESUIT





A candid shot of the founding members of the X-Men; Cyclops, Marvel Girl, Angel, Beast, Iceman, and myself, Professor Charles Xavier.



INTERSTELLAR TRAVEL

While we do not as a rule engage in interstellar travel, such events have been thrust upon us. These environmental suits based on Shi'ar design require prior training to use. Under no circumstances are they to be removed from their storage chambers without authorization.

There was a time when I placed much emphasis on the importance of a uniform look for all of the X-Men. In an effort to foster, nurture and define the role of the individual's contribution to the greater whole, however, personalized attire is now encouraged. (Standard blue and gold training gear available upon request.)

uniform *n* **:** dress of a distinctive design worn by members of a particular group and serving as a means of identification

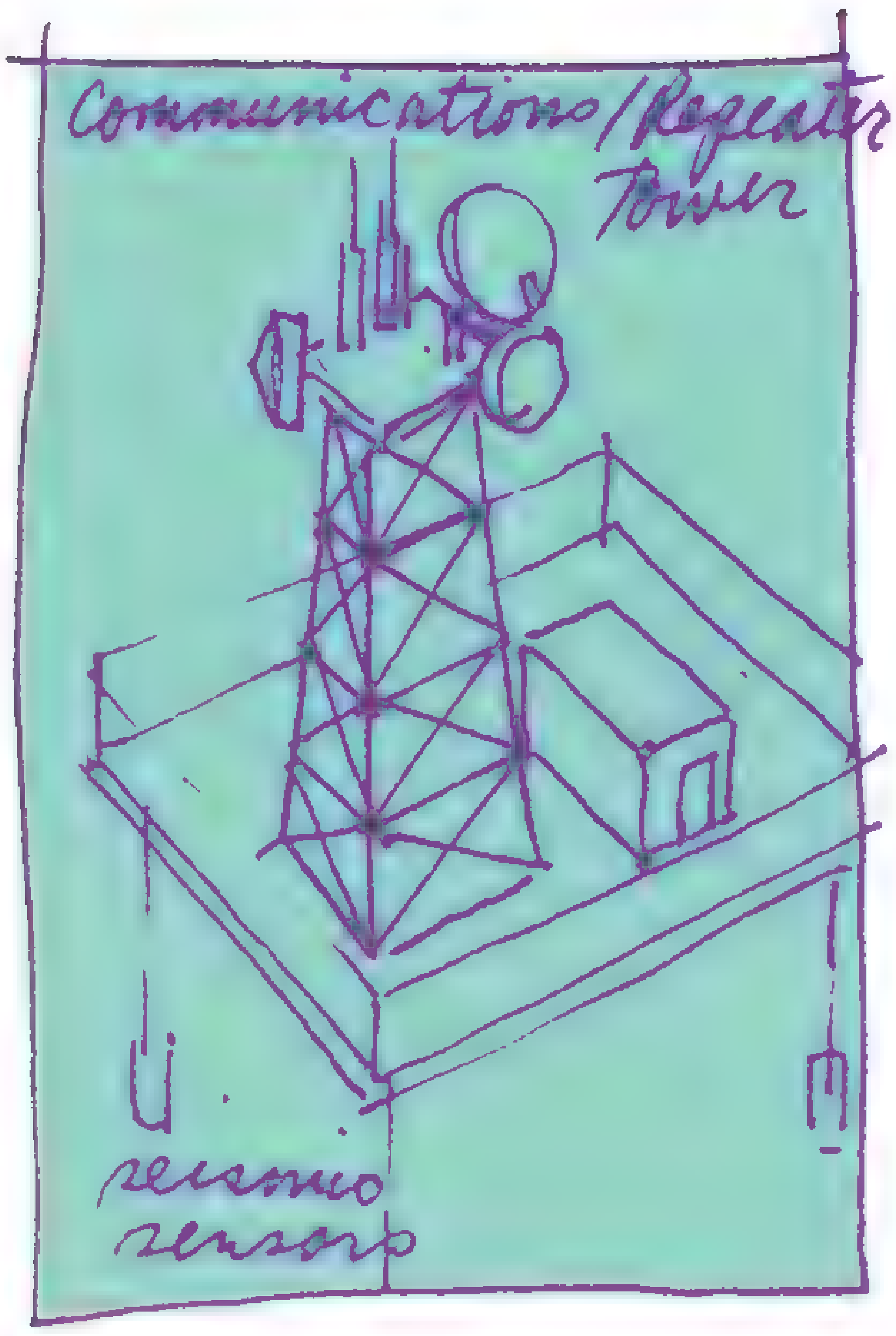
(From WEBSTER'S NINTH NEW COLLEGIATE DICTIONARY)

SECURITY
on the estate grounds

Located as we are, approximately 5 kilometers outside of Salem Center, our relative seclusion is our first security. However, recent housing developments and the growing awareness by some of our foes of our location demands we be even more vigilant, even more cautious.

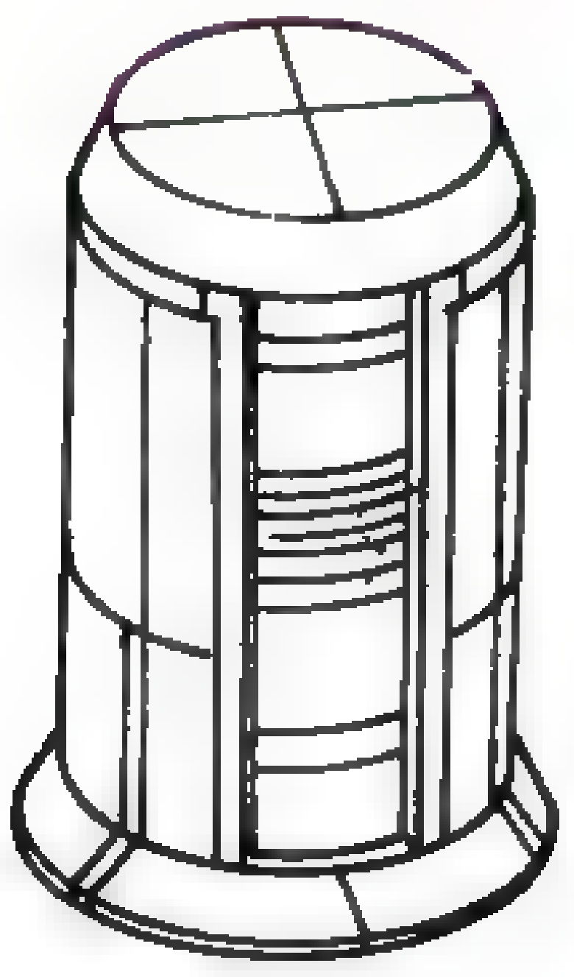
Authorized vehicles and personnel are detected by long range sensor scans. Visitors with appointments are issued a one-shot electro-pass at the gate which serves to identify and vocally guide them through the mansion. Access to other levels can only be gained with a team member or through an emergency computer decision.

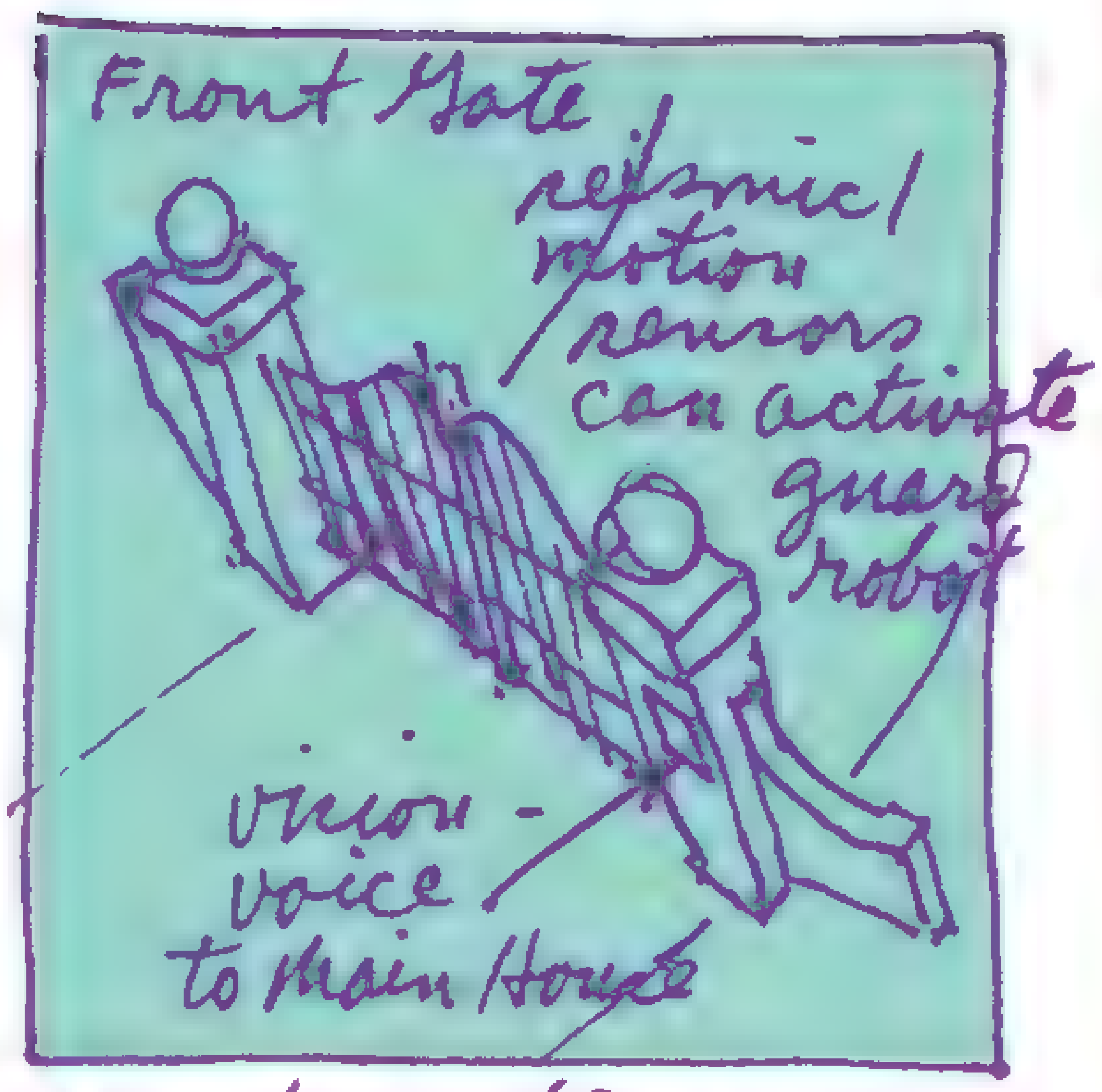
The estate is equipped with state of the art environmental and individual protective technology. Prudence dictates that some of the Mansion's security parameters are not to be committed to hard copy. Complete security procedures are, however, psionically implanted in each student during orientation. As new threats to our safety become apparent, we will upgrade environmental and individual protective technology.



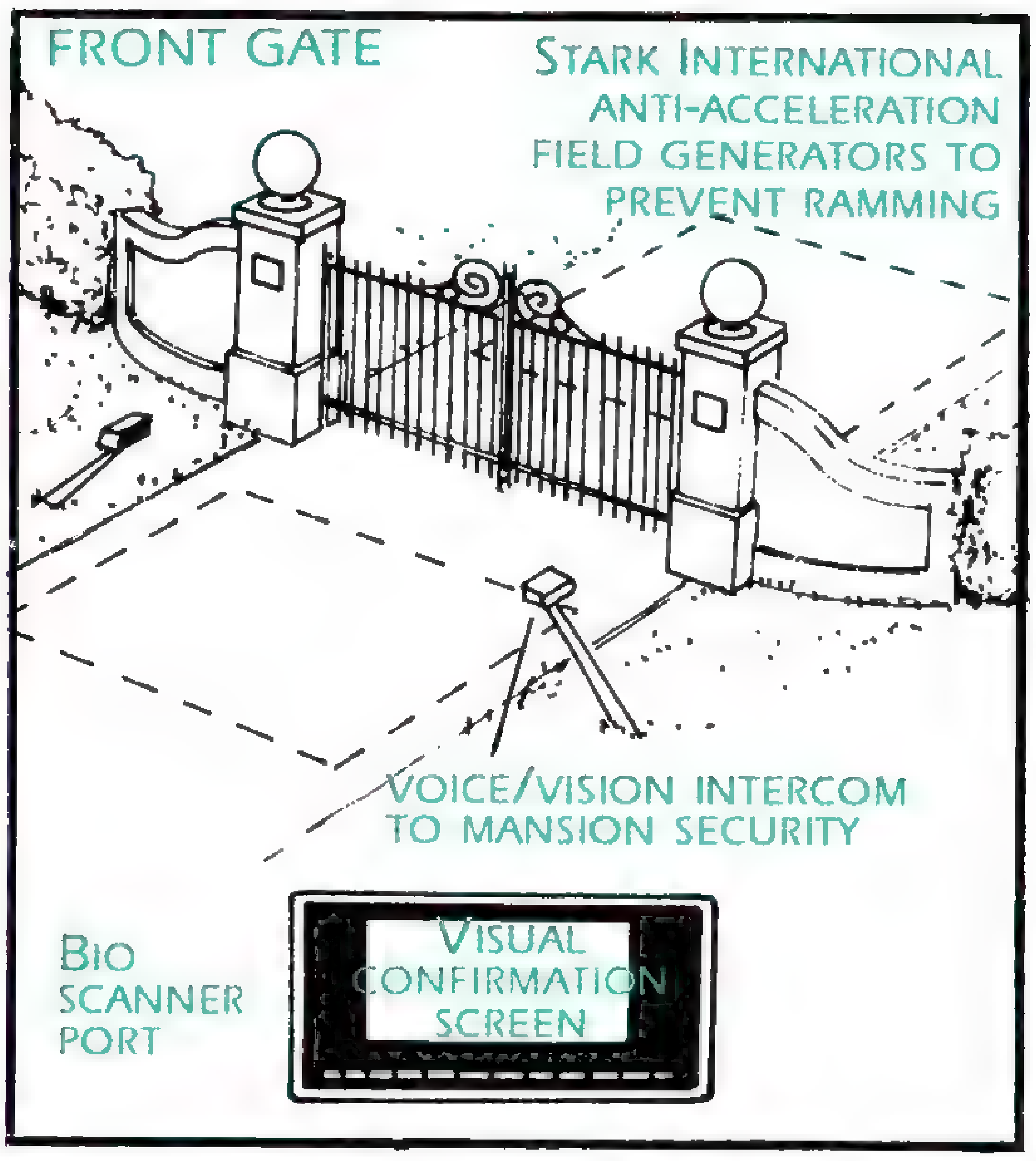
This "radio shack" provides communication monitoring and equipment logs. The structure is explosion-proof and has standard battery backups. The tower provides seismic alarms below ground and motion detection alarms above.

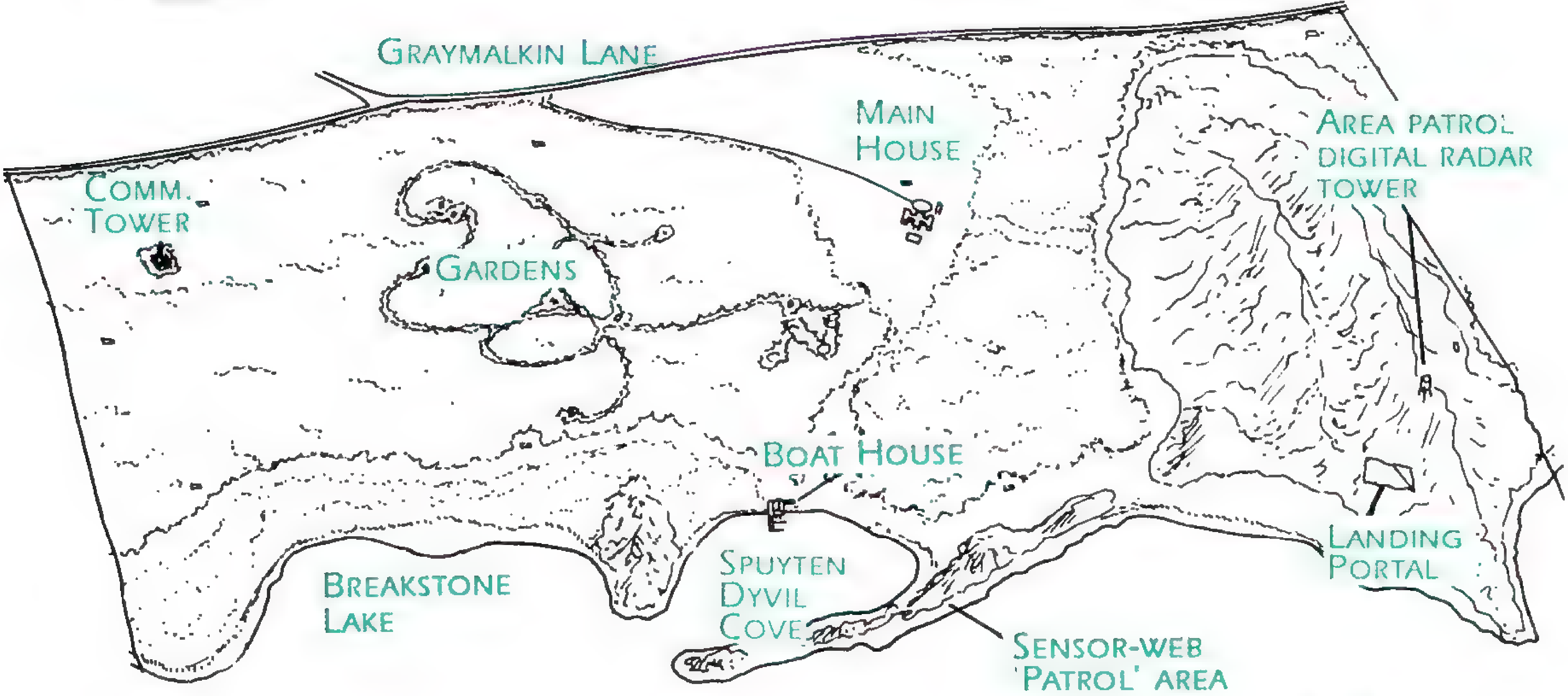
Typical guard robot–mainly used for deterrence but with limited offensive capability. Guard robots are part of in-ground anti-aircraft emplacements.



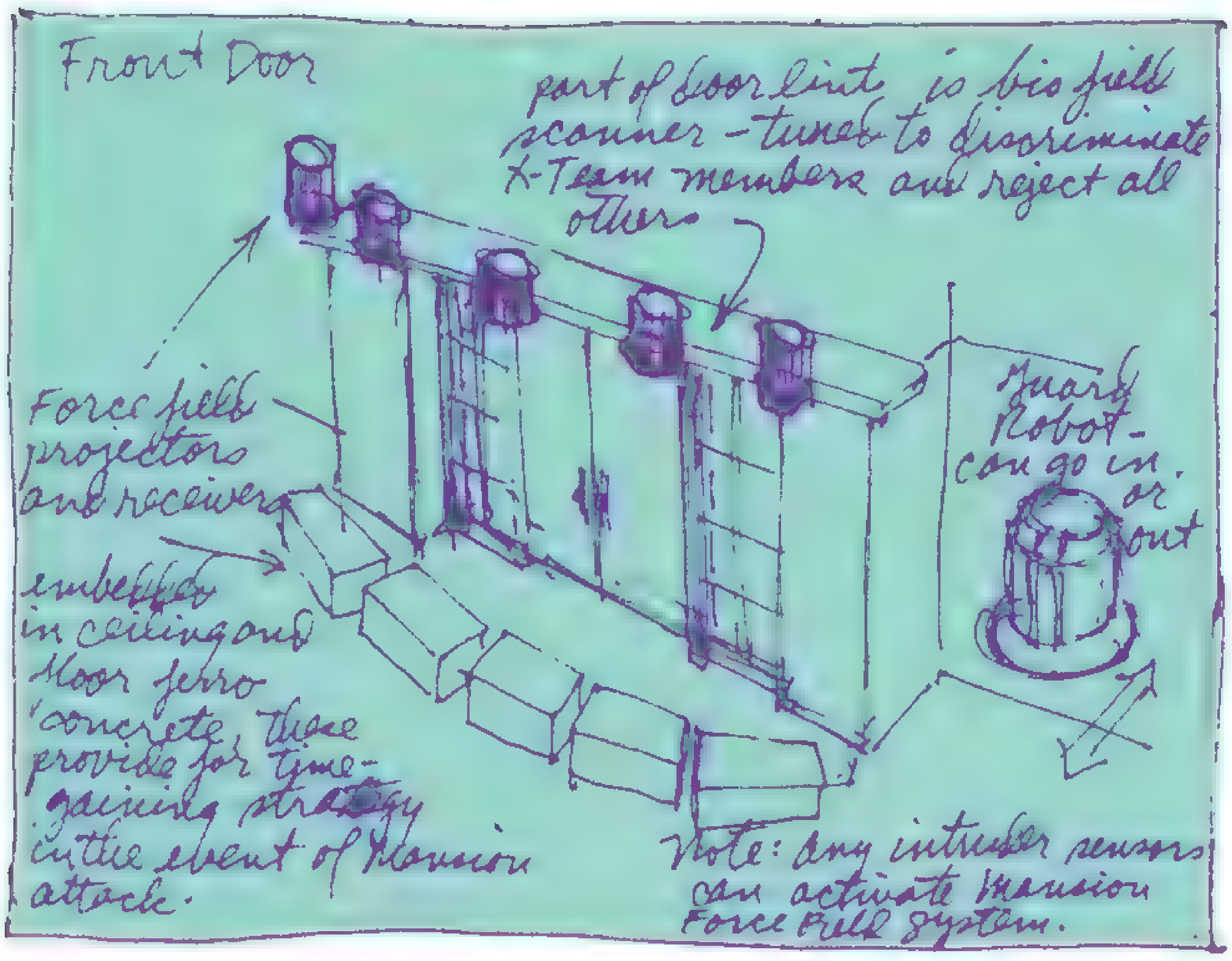

Front Gate
seismic/motion sensors can activate guard robot
vision - voice to Main House

Authorized vehicles and personnel are detected by long range sensor scan


FRONT GATE
STARK INTERNATIONAL ANTI-ACCELERATION FIELD GENERATORS TO PREVENT RAMMING
VOICE/VISION INTERCOM TO MANSION SECURITY
BIO SCANNER PORT
VISUAL CONFIRMATION SCREEN


GRAYMALKIN LANE
MAIN HOUSE
COMM. TOWER
GARDENS
AREA PATROL DIGITAL RADAR TOWER
BOAT HOUSE
LANDING PORTAL
BREAKSTONE LAKE
SPUYTEN DYVIL COVE
SENSOR-WEB 'PATROL' AREA

X-MEN PROPERTY-SECURITY OVERVIEW


Front Door
part of door unit is bio field scanner - tuned to discriminate X-Team members and reject all others
Force field projectors and receivers
embedded in ceiling and floor ferro concrete, these provide for time-gaining strategy in the event of Mansion attack.
Guard Robot - can go in or out
Note: any intruder sensors can activate Mansion Force Field system.

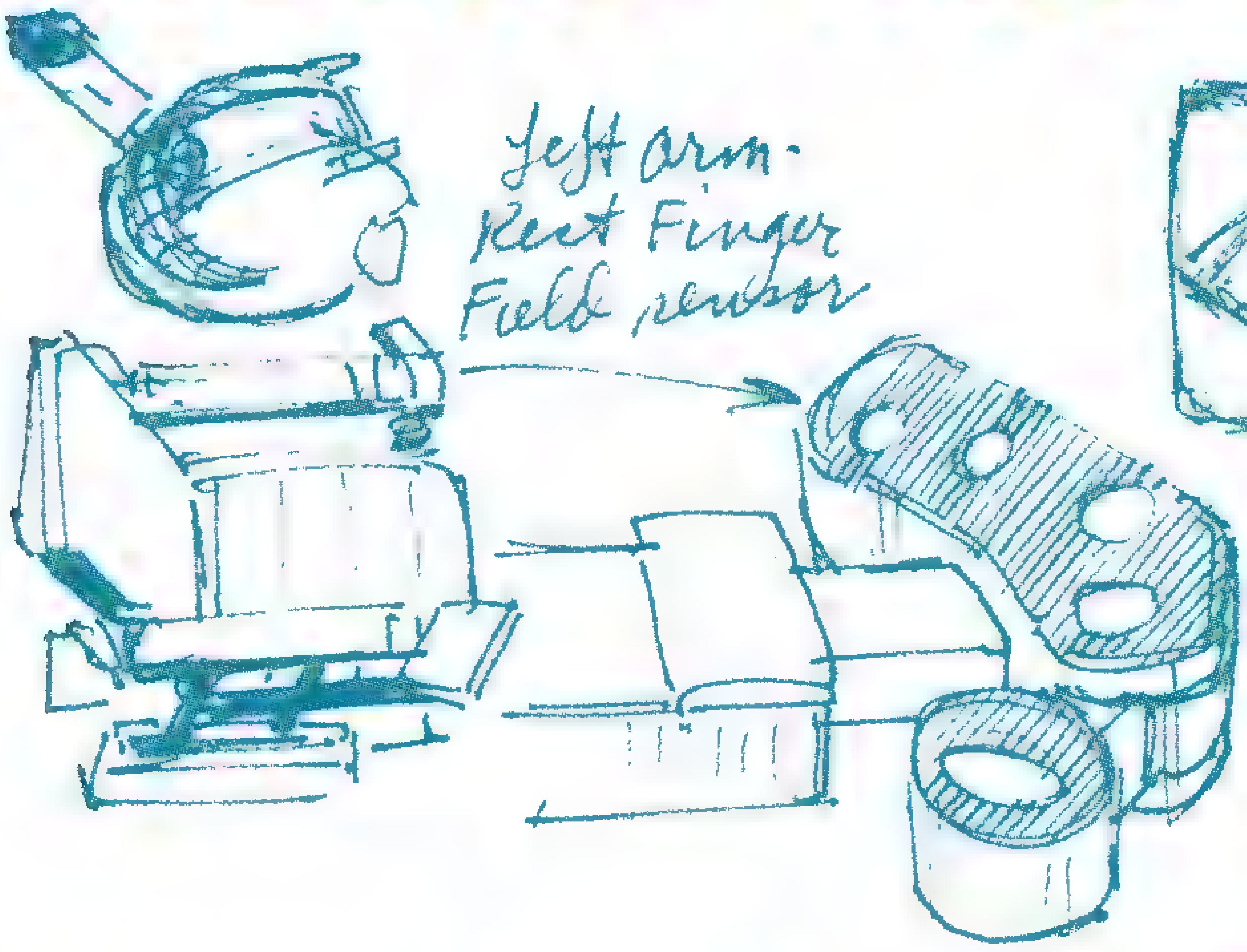
Warning: Estate grounds are honey-combed with tunnels and underground passageways of great antiquity. Caution is advised. See page 22.

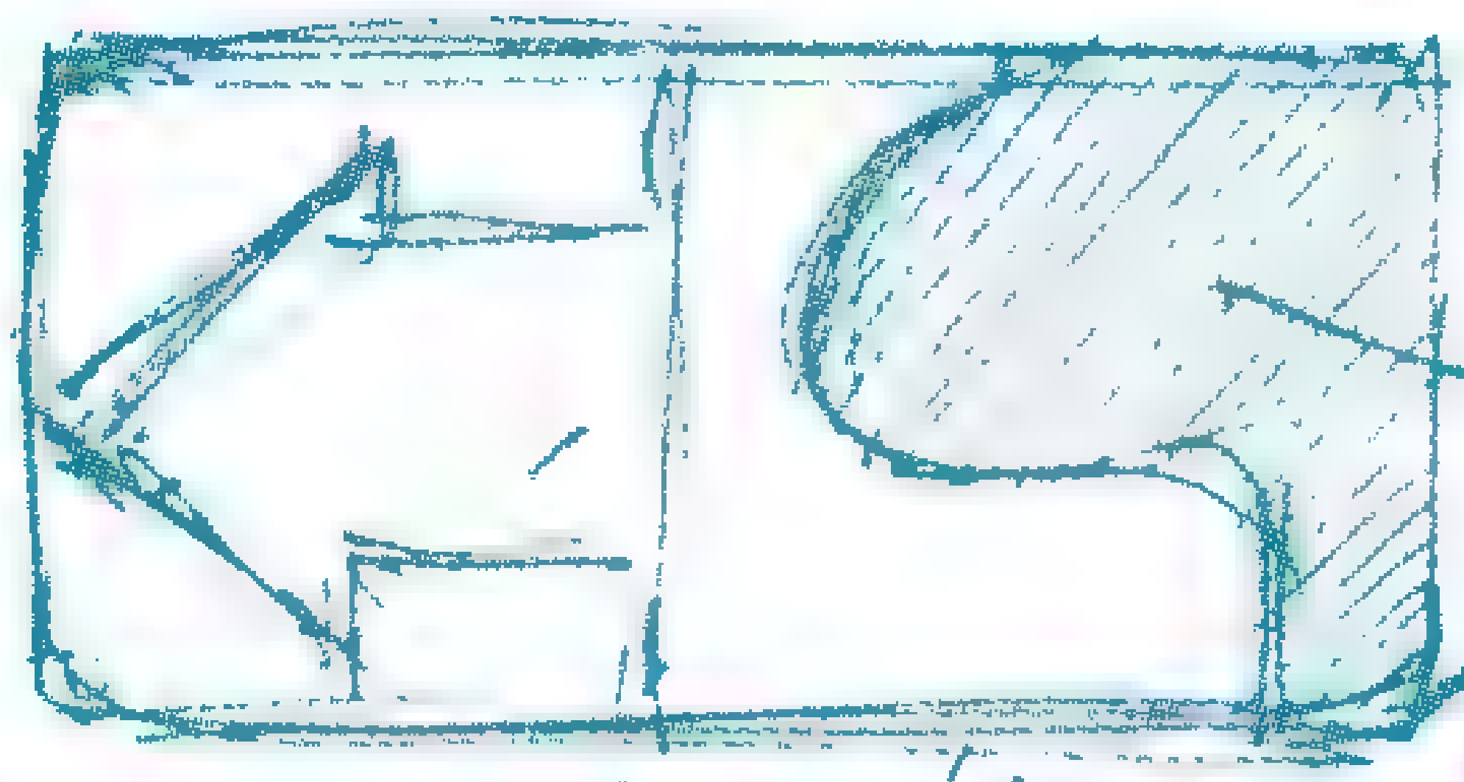
▪Individuals are also advised to avoid the area containing Devil's Rock. Approach this stone with extreme caution for your own security.

▪Also, as we are lakefront property, never go swimming alone. Follow standard water safety procedures around the lake and with boating equipment.

SECURITY

inside the mansion


Left arm-Rest Finger Field sensor


X-Men Smart Key
finger contact area for galvanic ID

Smart Key usage is constantly updated by Master Control

CEREBRO SECURITY

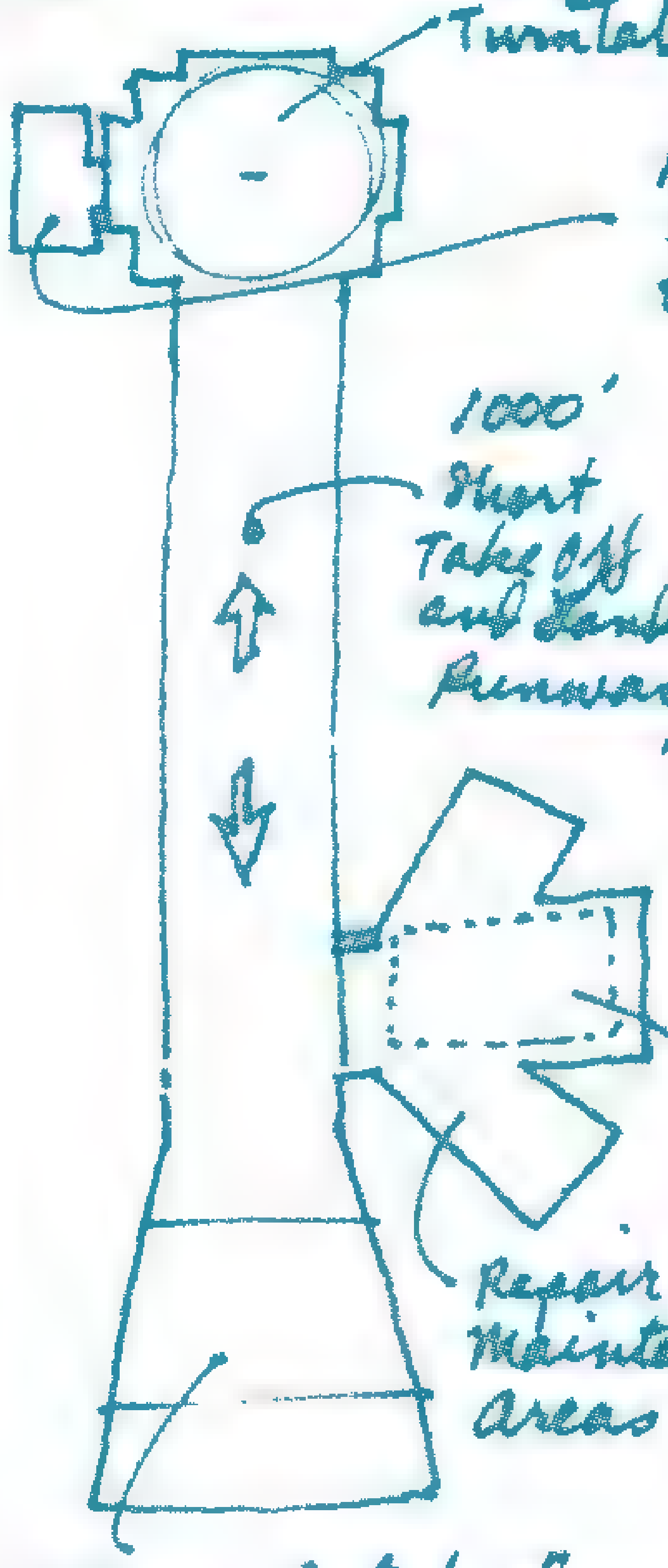
Finger pads (reconfigurable for other races) conduct expressive body-field measurements that identify individuals. The Lo-Res Antenna info plus the Finger Field sensor input is monitored throughout Cerebro use–any irregularities could be a sign of deception or psi intrusion.

The Cerebro User List is subject to periodic review and battlefield update.

FROM THE PAGES OF

FORGE'S NOTEBOOK

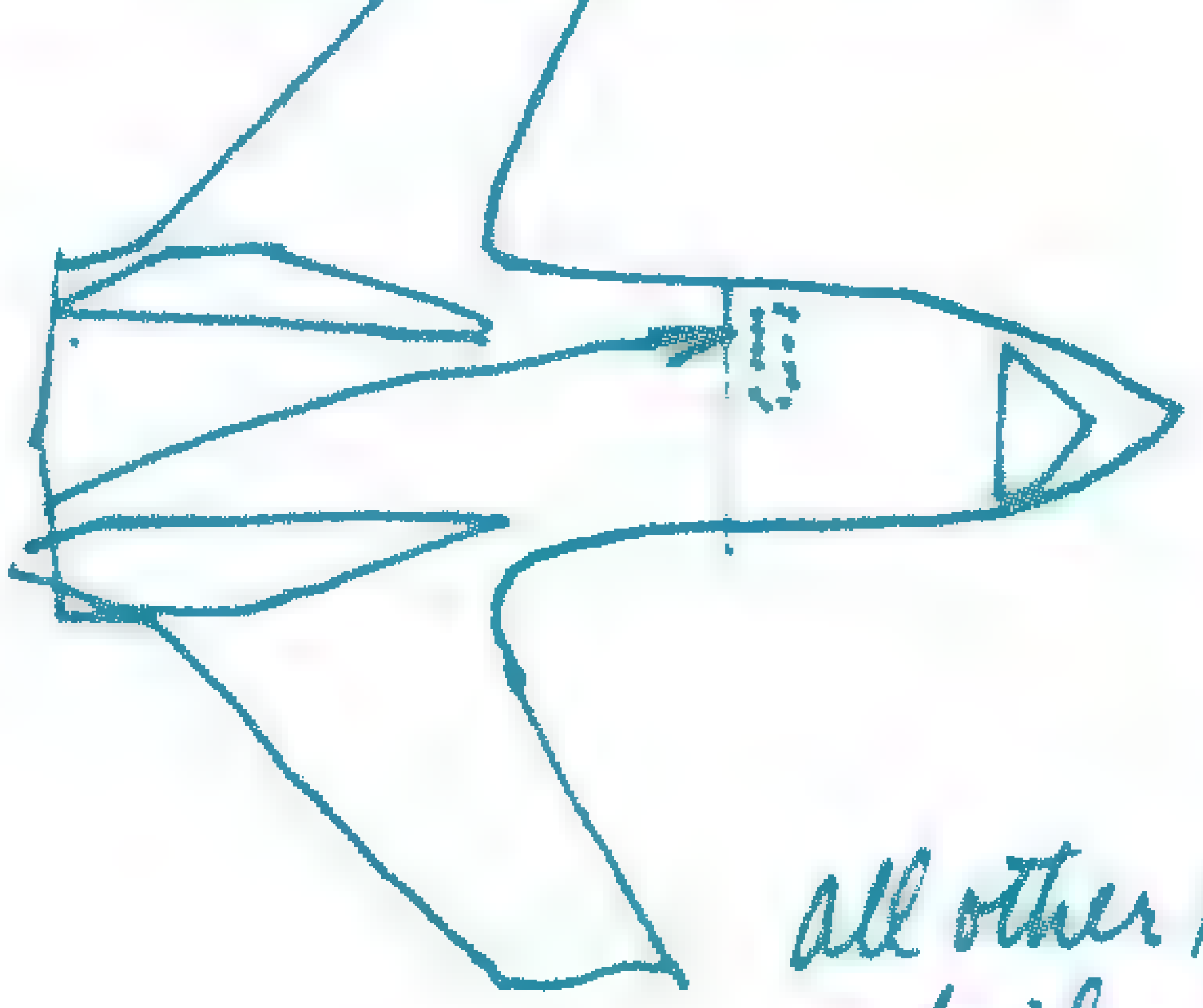
Hangar Security


Turntable
High-Speed Shuttle Entrance to Hangar
1000' Short Take Off and Landing Runway
Elevator to Shops below
Repair & Maintenance areas

Hangar space is carved out of solid mountain - only penetrations are well-protected Plane Catcher Entrance, Shuttle Entrance and mountain top Radar station - which is not usually manned air ducting and water in and outlets are armored and alarmed.

"Plane Catcher" Tractor Beam array - guides invited guests without X-Men Instrument Landing System.

Tractor Beams also serve to repel casual visitors, either on foot or in aircraft



Access to B-Bird is limited to Team Members and the updated-daily Duty Roster. Mansion Housekeeping and Tactical Combat Computers can allow practically anyone into the B-Bird - under appropriate circumstances. The B-Bird's own Auto-Pilot computer can make such decisions, when out of contact with Base.

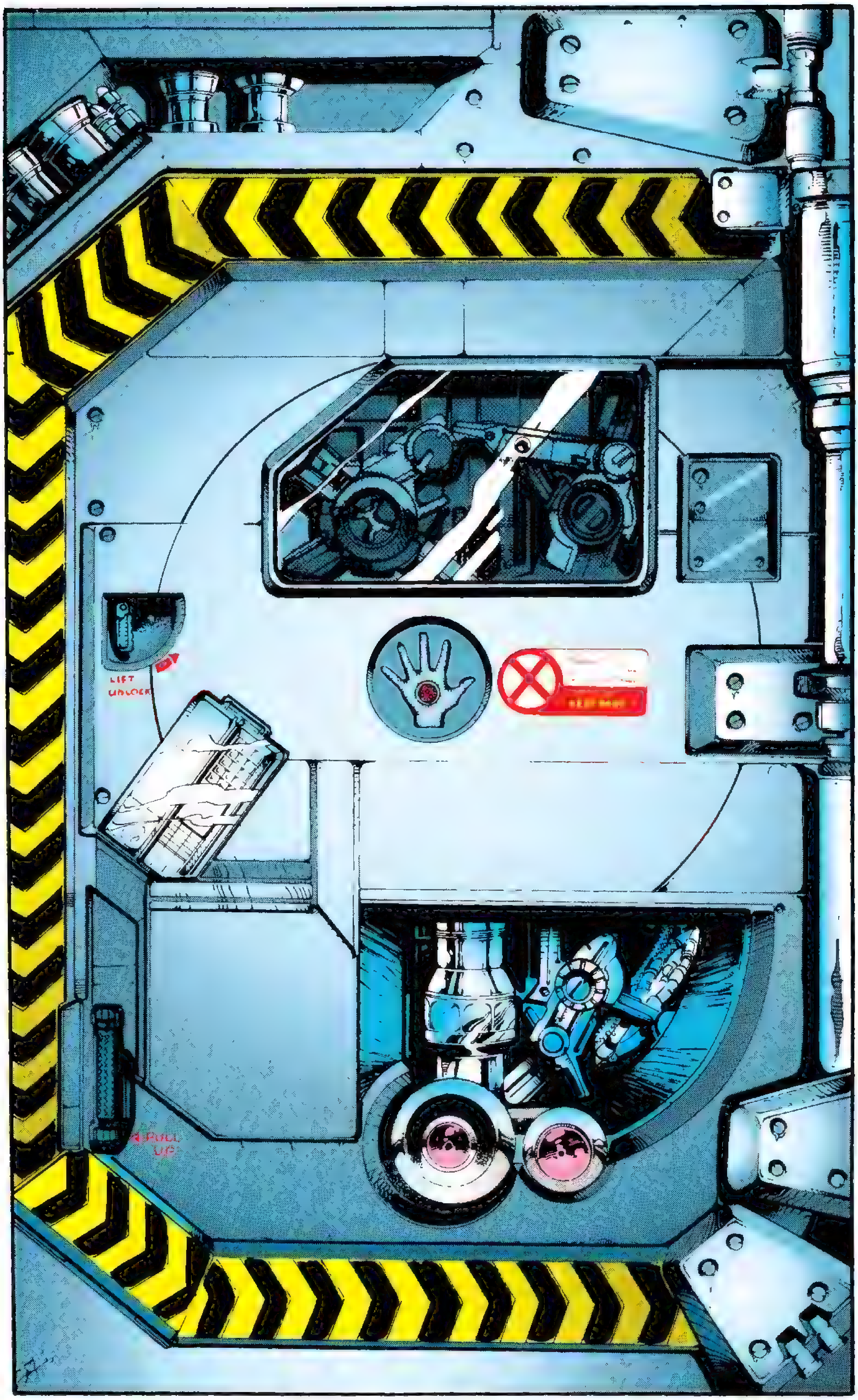
All other Hull penetrations (ejection seats, canopy, bail-out tubes, etc) should not be used as entrances - but they can be, in emergency

SECURITY DOORS

Constructed of adamantium-melded steel to protect the most sensitive areas of the sub-basement complex, these specially designed doors with bio-molecular locking mechanisms respond only to authorized personnel (read: Professor Xavier and senior staff.)

WAR ROOM SECURITY

Security in this area is relatively light because of the difficulty in reaching this area. Individual stations have constant monitoring for user integrity. Sensitive information sources such as The Mission Planning Globe and the Training Coordination Center are "Key Switches." (See "X-Men Smart Key")



DANGER ROOM SECURITY

Danger Room doors and walls are primarily constructed of a Nickel-Titanium alloy. Layered within these walls are localized force fields triggered by Master Control Intruder Detection Systems. Similarly, dedicated electromechanical security devices regulate entry to the Ready Room Elevator and Control Room.

RESTRICTED AREAS

RESTRICTED AREAS

PLAN NUMBER
2007734
9/119
MTS
944
SQUARE FEET

OVERHEAD VIEW

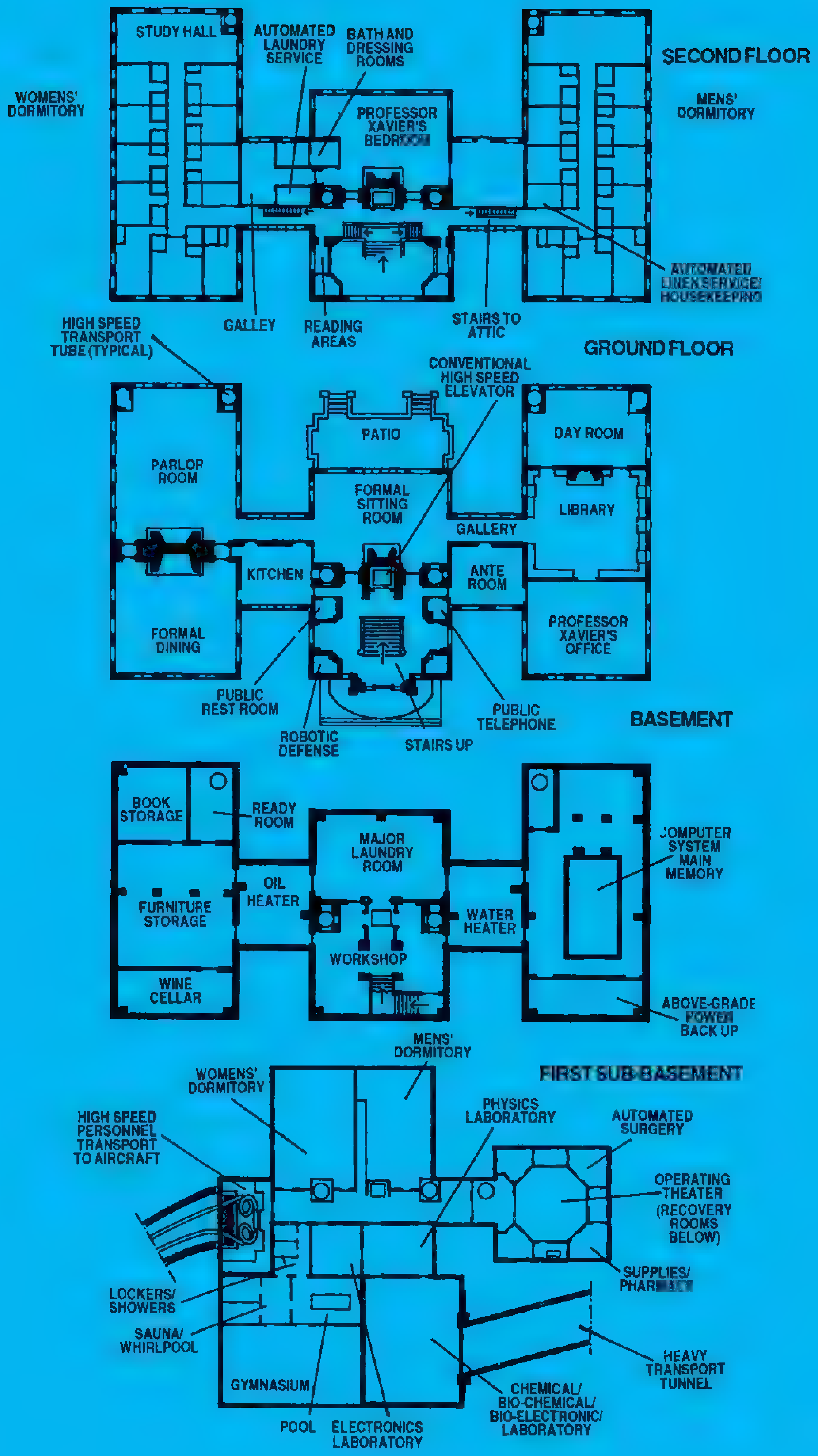
This is an architect's cutaway overhead view of the mansion, executed during a recent renovation.

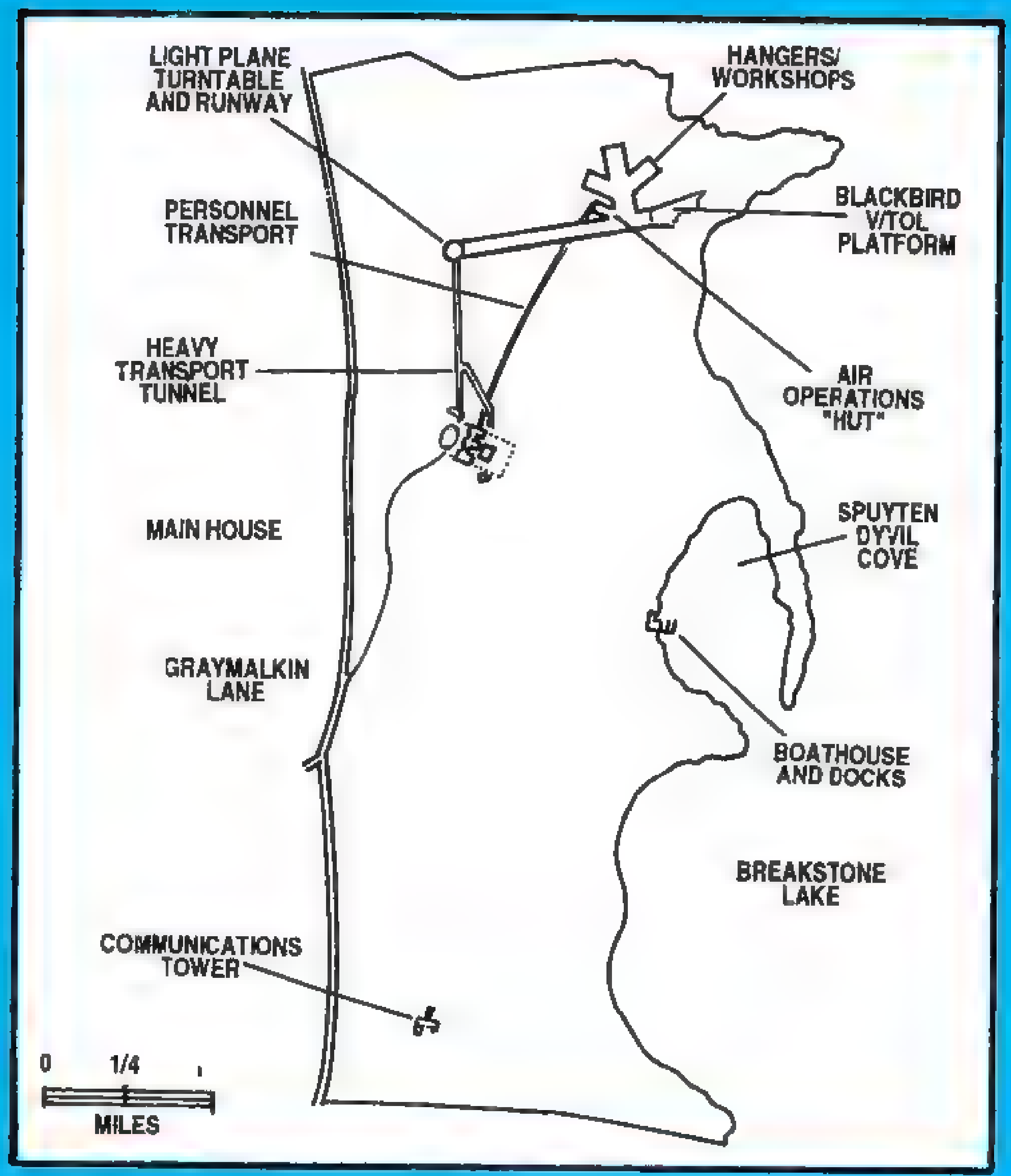
THE MANSION

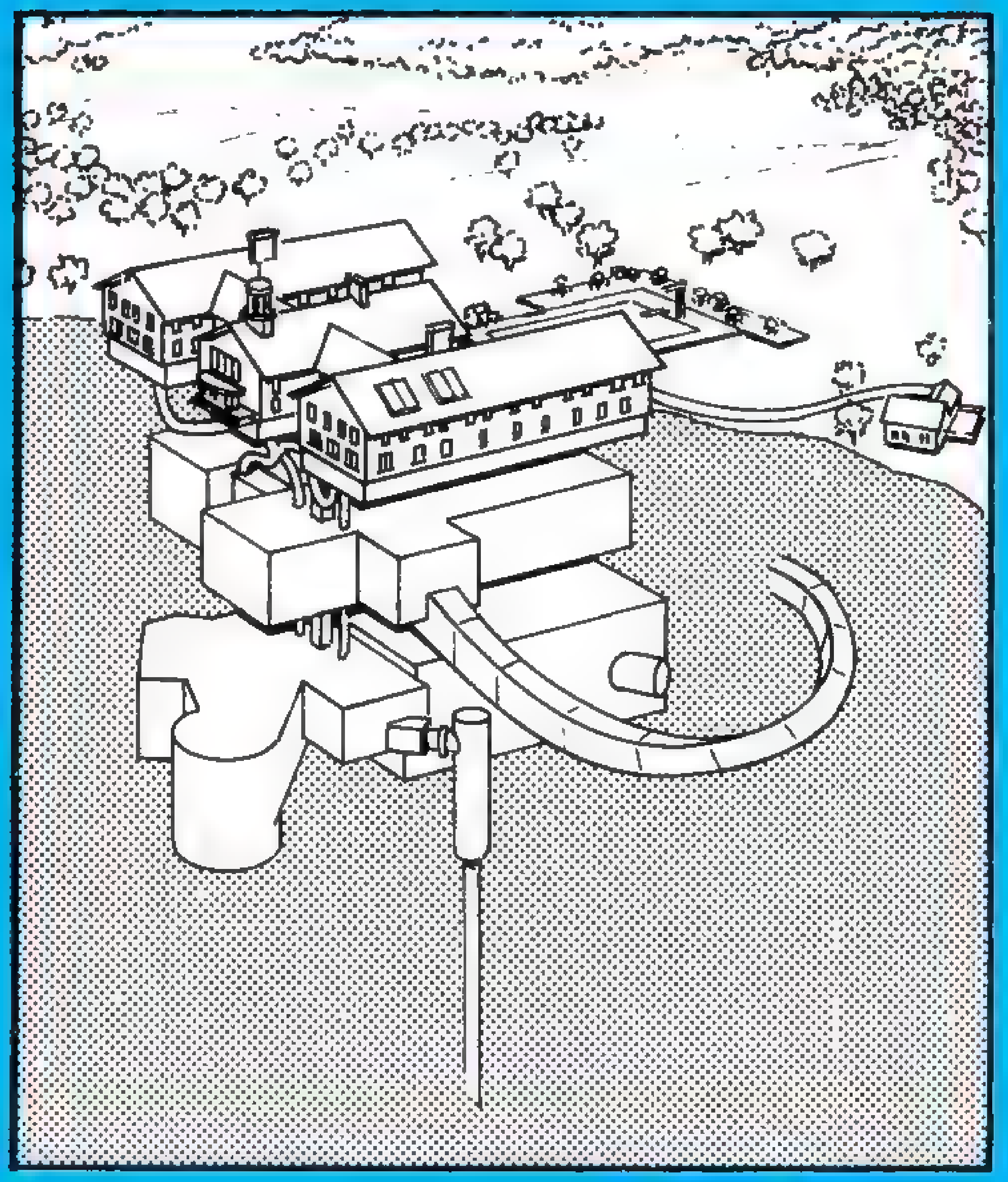
Located at 1407 Graymalkin Lane in Salem Center, New York, the foundation of the mansion dates back to the 1700's and has always been in the Xavier family. Built on the edge of Breakstone Lake by Dutch ancestors, it is now publicly known as the Xavier Institute for Higher Learning, a respected private school with a highly limited enrollment.

In general, the mansion above ground is for public use and public observation. All attempts have been made to preserve the historical and architectural integrity of its above ground structure. All levels beginning at basement sub-level A are for X-Men use only and specially authorized non-X-Men personnel. This is, of course, for security reasons.

The mansion has been rebuilt and expanded several times in the last few years with a mind toward personal comfort, space and security. We have sought to provide our students ample living and study spaces, providing both privacy and comfort.


SECOND FLOOR
STUDY HALL
AUTOMATED LAUNDRY SERVICE
BATH AND DRESSING ROOMS
PROFESSOR XAVIER'S BEDROOM
WOMENS' DORMITORY
MENS' DORMITORY
AUTOMATED LINEN SERVICE/ HOUSEKEEPING
HIGH SPEED TRANSPORT TUBE (TYPICAL)
GALLEY
READING AREAS
STAIRS TO ATTIC
GROUND FLOOR
CONVENTIONAL HIGH SPEED ELEVATOR
PATIO
DAY ROOM
PARLOR ROOM
FORMAL SITTING ROOM
LIBRARY
GALLERY
KITCHEN
ANTE ROOM
FORMAL DINING
PROFESSOR XAVIER'S OFFICE
PUBLIC REST ROOM
ROBOTIC DEFENSE
STAIRS UP
PUBLIC TELEPHONE
BASEMENT
BOOK STORAGE
READY ROOM
MAJOR LAUNDRY ROOM
COMPUTER SYSTEM MAIN MEMORY
OIL HEATER
FURNITURE STORAGE
WATER HEATER
WORKSHOP
WINE CELLAR
ABOVE-GRADE POWER BACK UP
MENS' DORMITORY
WOMENS' DORMITORY
FIRST SUB-BASEMENT
HIGH SPEED PERSONNEL TRANSPORT TO AIRCRAFT
PHYSICS LABORATORY
AUTOMATED SURGERY
OPERATING THEATER (RECOVERY ROOMS BELOW)
SUPPLIES/ PHARMACY
LOCKERS/ SHOWERS
SAUNA/ WHIRLPOOL
HEAVY TRANSPORT TUNNEL
GYMNASIUM
POOL
ELECTRONICS LABORATORY
CHEMICAL/ BIO-CHEMICAL/ BIO-ELECTRONIC/ LABORATORY

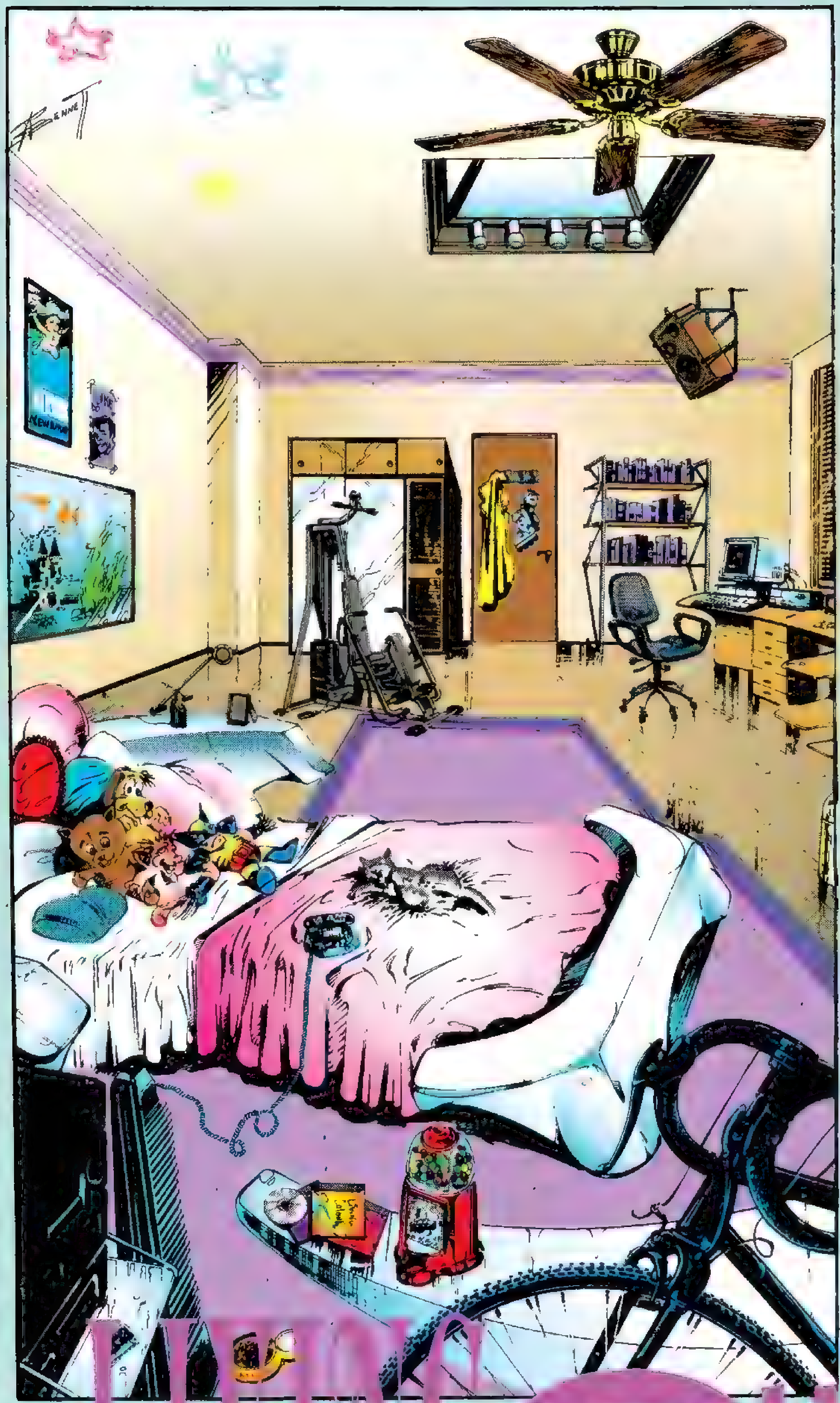

LIGHT PLANE TURNTABLE AND RUNWAY
HANGERS/ WORKSHOPS
BLACKBIRD V/TOL PLATFORM
PERSONNEL TRANSPORT
HEAVY TRANSPORT TUNNEL
AIR OPERATIONS "HUT"
MAIN HOUSE
SPUYTEN DYVIL COVE
GRAYMALKIN LANE
BOATHOUSE AND DOCKS
BREAKSTONE LAKE
COMMUNICATIONS TOWER
0
1/4
1
MILES



CUTAWAY OF GROUNDS

XAVIER INSTITUTE
FOR HIGHER LEARNING

STUDY HALL
DROP TUBES HIGH SPEED PERSONNEL TRANSPORT
PARLOR ROOM
BOOK STORAGE
WOMEN'S DORMITORY
XAVIER'S CHAMBERS
STUDENT GALLEY
LAUNDRY
FORMAL SITTING ROOM
DAY ROOM
LIBRARY
XAVIER'S CEREBRO
MEN'S DORMITORY
MAIN MEMORY STORAGE
ELEVATOR TO ALL FLOORS
KITCHEN
XAVIER'S AUTOMATED RECEPTION AREA
MANSION THREAT ASSESS RADAR/ COMMUNI- CATIONS MAST
WINE CELLAR
FORMAL DINING
HOUSE MAIN- TENANCE ROBOT
PATIO
BACK-UP POWER
XAVIER'S OFFICE

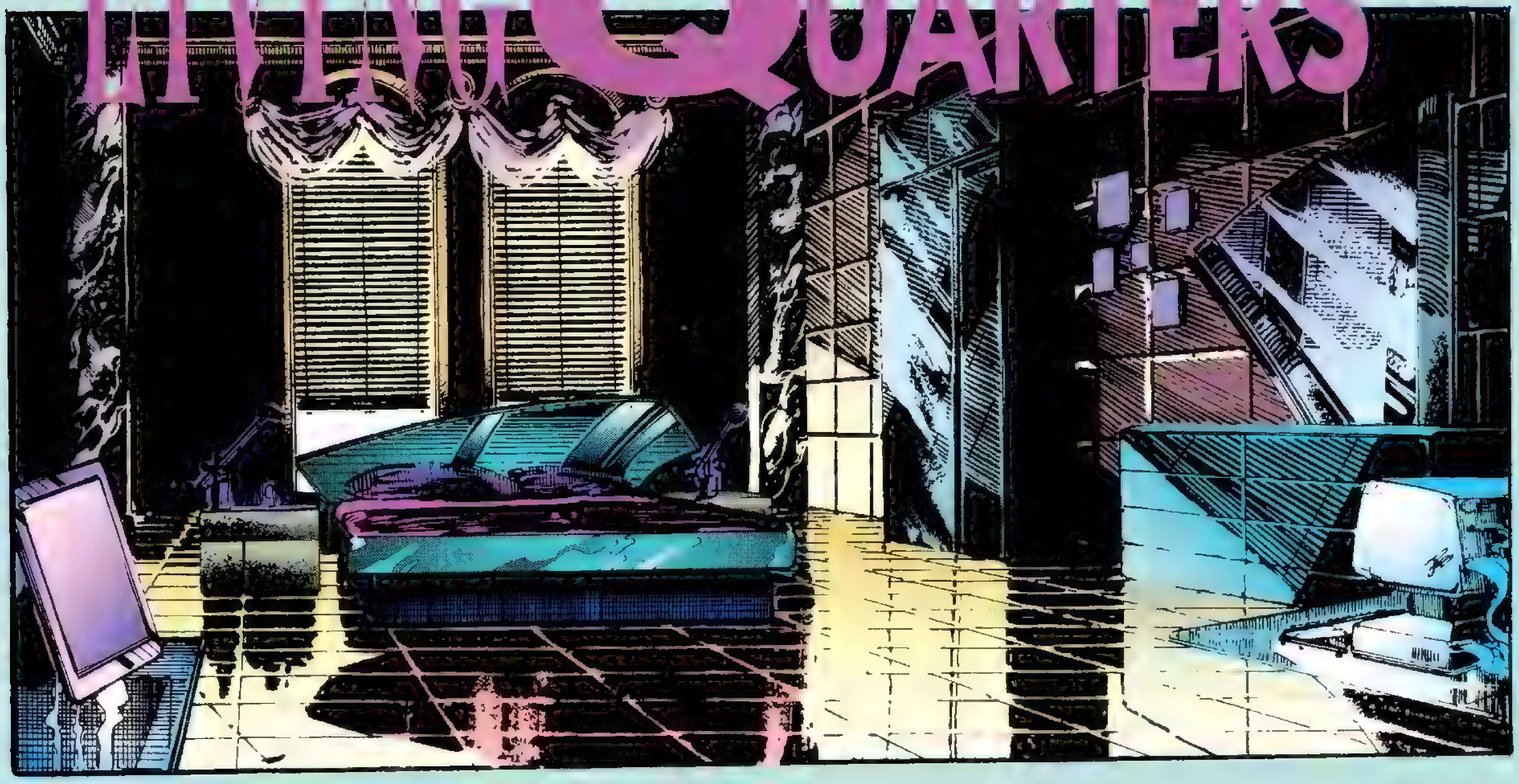


Every effort is made to provide each student with his or her own living quarters. As it is understood that this is where you'll be spending a good portion of your down time feel free to furnish and decorate your room to suit your individual tastes and preferences. Pictured here are the living quarters of two current X-Men members, Jubilee and Gambit.

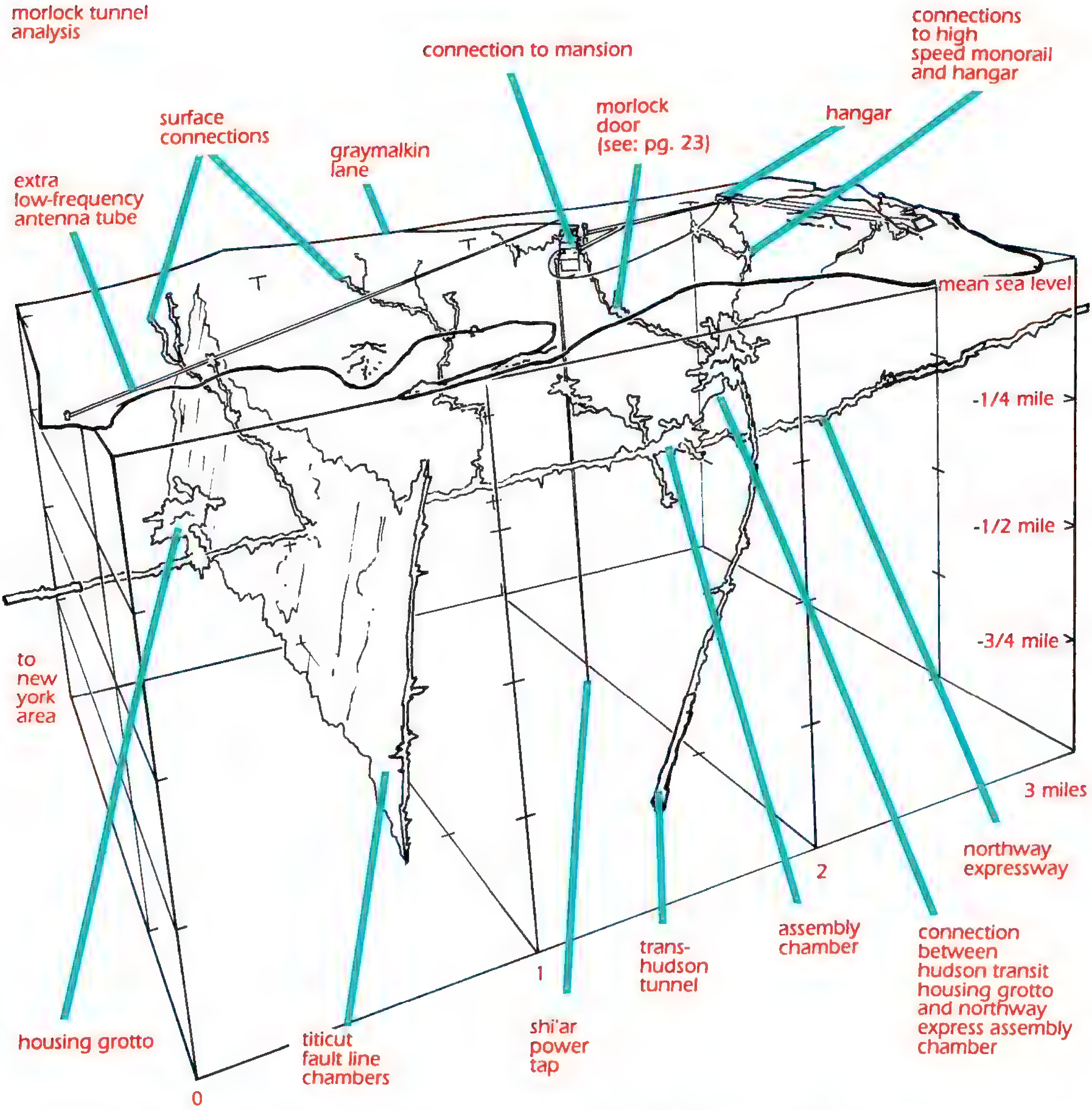
Because security considerations preclude the use of a full-time housekeeper, it is important that each student assume responsibility for keeping their personal space in order. Computer terminals in each room connect with the main computer and can also, when necessary, be used for internal communications.

Appreciating the need for leisure time, the mansion is equipped with a state of the art gameroom. Everything from pool tables, continually upgraded video games (labelled #1), a virtual reality interplay with holographic projections (#2), to current video releases from the farthest reaches of the galaxy (#3) (as provided by Ms. Lila Chaney) is available to all students. Naturally, the bar area (#4) is restricted to adults.

LIVING QUARTERS



GAME ROOM
1
2
3
4


morlock tunnel analysis
connection to mansion
connections to high speed monorail and hangar
surface connections
morlock door (see: pg. 23)
hangar
graymalkin lane
extra low-frequency antenna tube
mean sea level
-1/4 mile
-1/2 mile
-3/4 mile
to new york area
3 miles
northway expressway
2
assembly chamber
connection between hudson transit housing grotto and northway express assembly chamber
trans-hudson tunnel
1
shi'ar power tap
housing grotto
titicut fault line chambers
0

Though the tunnels are no longer occupied by the often times hostile group of mutants known collectively as the Morlocks, this underground labyrinth remains our weakest area of defense. Little is known regarding the original construction of the tunnels which predates Morlock occupation. Because of the highly unstable and progressively deteriorating nature of these pathways, (further complicated by the presence of subterranean rivers with extremely dangerous currents) much of the tunnels remain uncharted—while that which is known to us is constantly monitored by computer surveillance, with defensive stun beams installed at crucial junctures to prevent attack from this quarter.

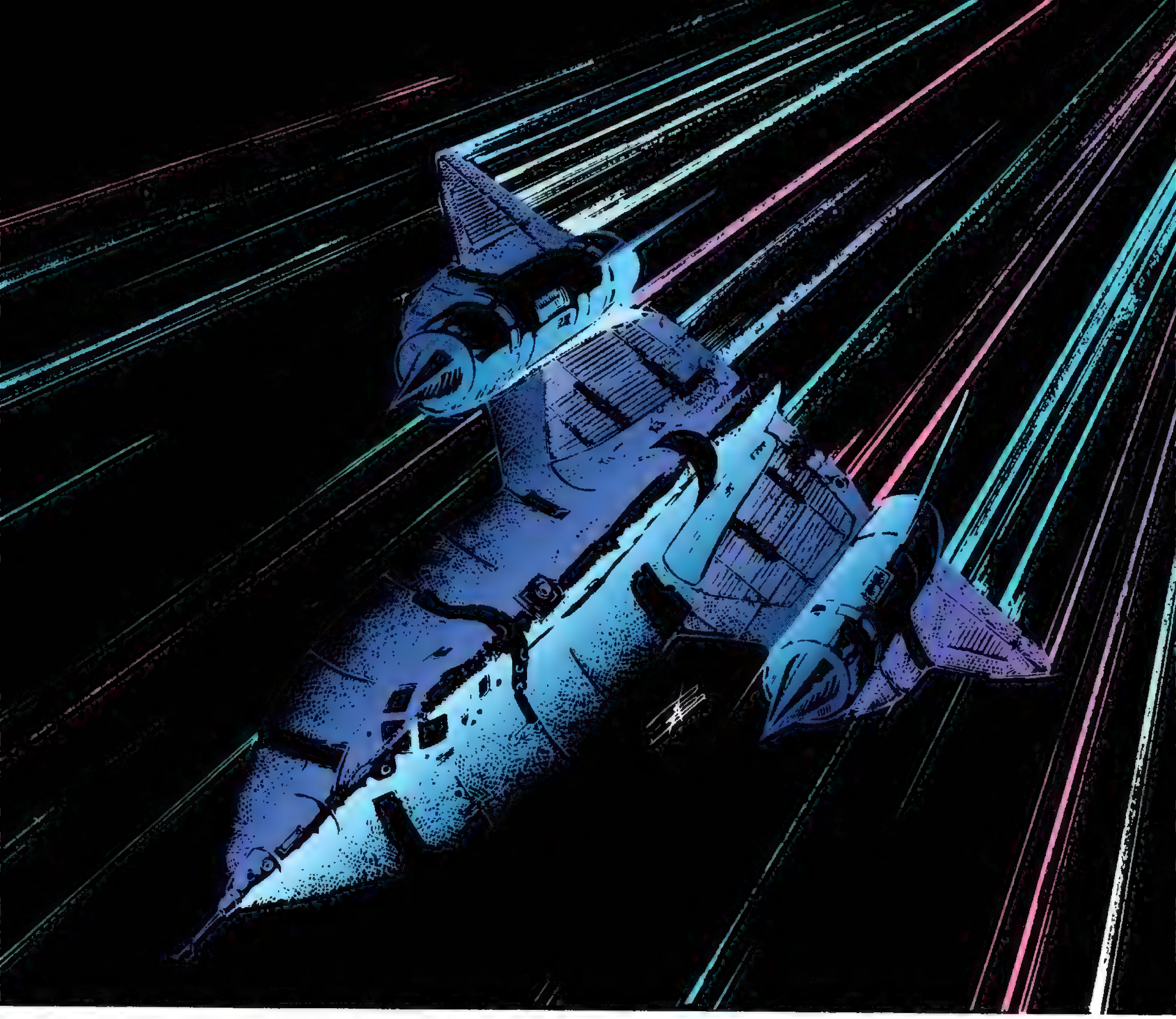
the Morlock TUNNELS

NOTE: Admittance to the tunnels is strictly prohibited except in the event of a full-scale assault on the mansion. If all other alternate routes have been cut off, the tunnels may become an egress of last resort. Subterranean evacuation drills are held in the Danger Room holo-grid once a month. Drill attendance is mandatory.

KEEP AWAY

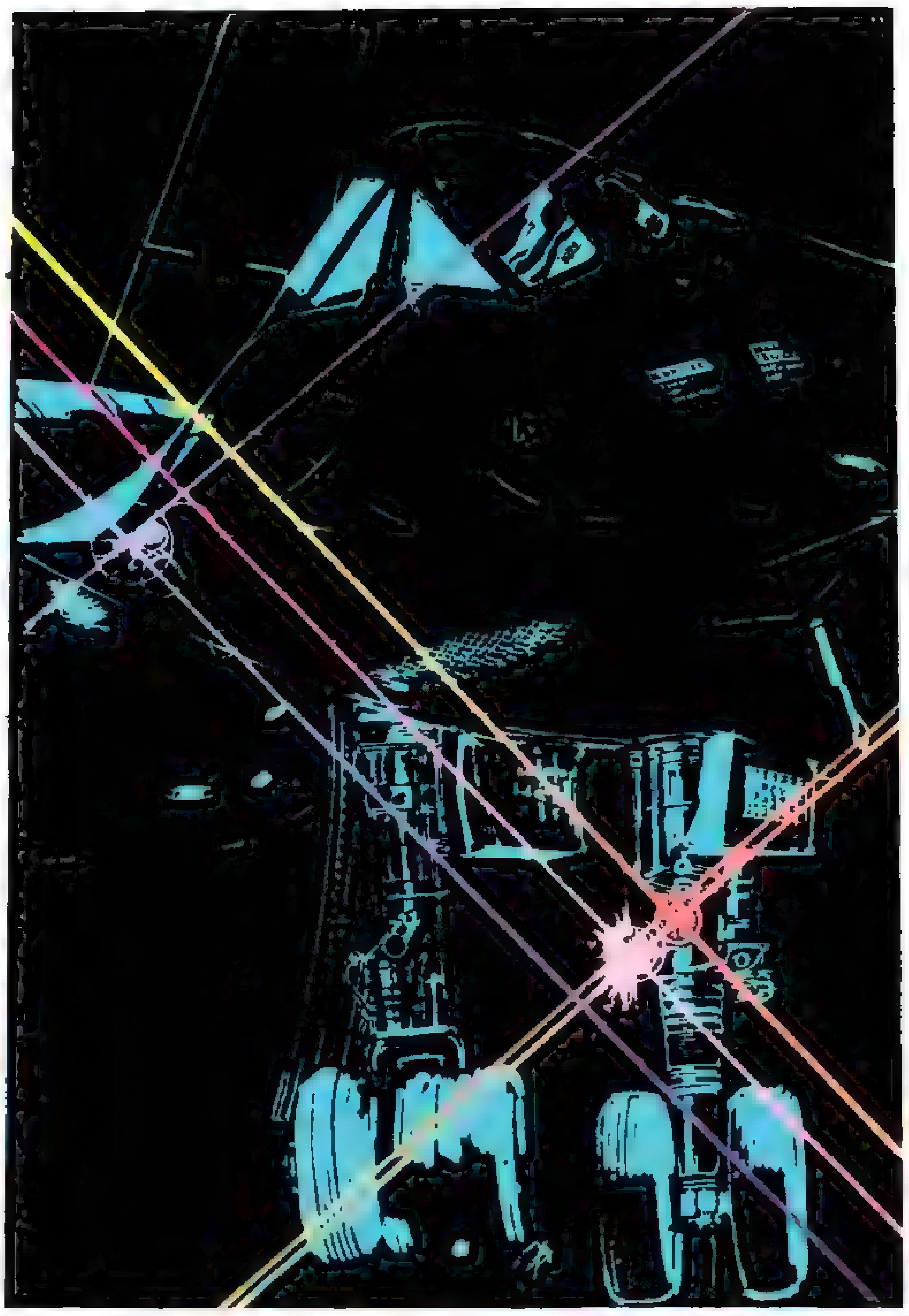
THE HANGAR

high speed personnel transport
garage
heavy lift elevator
cross section of monorail tube
turntable
mansion
hangar end
runway
hangar complex
overhead crane
inbound deceleration loop (-3g)
outbound acceleration loop (3g)
take off/ landing ramp
service tube go-cart
exhaust attenuation system
jet fuel storage
transport tunnel
monorail station
runway
overshoot explosive-assist catcher net array
elevator to air traffic control tower
fire fighting robots/tractor bay
air exchange plant
disappearing floors - allow elevators to pass
overhead crane -can travel down runway
maintenance/ parking bays
heavy lift elevator to upper levels



The Hangar bay, which is the storage port for the Blackbirds, can be reached by monorail leaving from sub level six. The distance of .62 miles can be covered in 20 seconds under emergency conditions. Practice drills are, again, mandatory to orient yourself with disembarking. At present the institute has 2 Blackbird jets—one designated for the X-Men's gold team and one for the blue team. Blackbird Blue is based on our original model and Blackbird Gold incorporates Forge's latest design features. Both are manufactured by Forge and are comparable in abilities, range and speed. Blackbird pilot training is available and strongly suggested, but not mandatory. Flight station simulators are located in Hangar Level 1A. Pilots are strictly required, whenever possible, to follow applicable FAA safety guidelines.

BLACKBIRD



BLACKBIRD

THIS CRAFT IS INTENDED TO BE A TRANSSONIC TRANSPORTATION DEVICE THAT CAN CARRY ALL CURRENT MEMBERS OF THE X-MEN PLUS SEVERAL PASSENGERS. THE BLACKBIRD IS EQUIPPED TO FLY LONG-DURATION, HIGH-ALTITUDE RECONNAISSANCE MISSIONS AND SHORTER TRIPS, AS WELL AS TO ANY CLIMATE. A MISSION-SPECIFIC ADD-ON POD CAN BE EQUIPPED FOR SEVERAL PRE-PLANNED OR EXOTIC MISSION SCENARIOS.

RADAR ASSEMBLY
CO-PILOT SEAT
ACES IV EJECTION SEAT (TYPICAL)
DISPLAY CONSOLES
ELECTRONIC COUNTER-MEASURES STATION
"WAR ROOM" EXTENSION
MAIN FUEL TANK
VERTICAL THRUST CONDUIT
VHF ANTENNA
VERTICAL THRUST DUCTING
CHAFF/FLARE DISPENSERS
ENGINE BYPASS INLETS
ENGINE THRUST DEFLECTOR (TO VERTICAL THRUSTERS)
ANTENNA FAIRING
PILOT SEAT
AVIONICS COOLING GROUND SUPPORT
FLIGHT ENGINEERS SEATS
FLIGHT, COMMUNICATIONS AVIONICS
FOLD DOWN SEATS
NOSE WHEEL (IN UP POSITION)
NOSE WHEEL (IN DOWN POSITION)
CREW HATCH
CREW LADDER (FULLY EXTENDED)
AIR INTAKE PATH
VERTICAL THRUSTER CLUSTER
ECM POD
VERTICAL THRUST CONDUIT
AFTERBURNER
FORWARD FLAPS
MAIN WHEELS (IN UP POSITION)
MAIN ENGINE (STARBOARD)
REAR FLAPS
MAIN WHEELS (IN DOWN POSITION)
SECONDARY FUEL TANKS
ECM ANTENNAS
forward hatch jettison handle
circuit breaker panel
manual hatch jettison handle
flight engineer's ejection seat hatch
holographic head up display
cabin lighting
cabin lighting
ecm station dss/oss interface
satelite communication select panel
integrated test system
marker beacon lights
engine parameter analog readouts
fuel management
co-pilot's throttle
main caution panel
pilot's throttle
radio/ satcom select
landing gear controls
ancillary defense panel
defensive systems
offense coordination/ command assistance panel
remote cerebro connection
internal communication
offensive systems station
instant on parachute dispenser (4 0f 8)
crew hatch (jettisonable)
galley

Danger room PROGRAMS

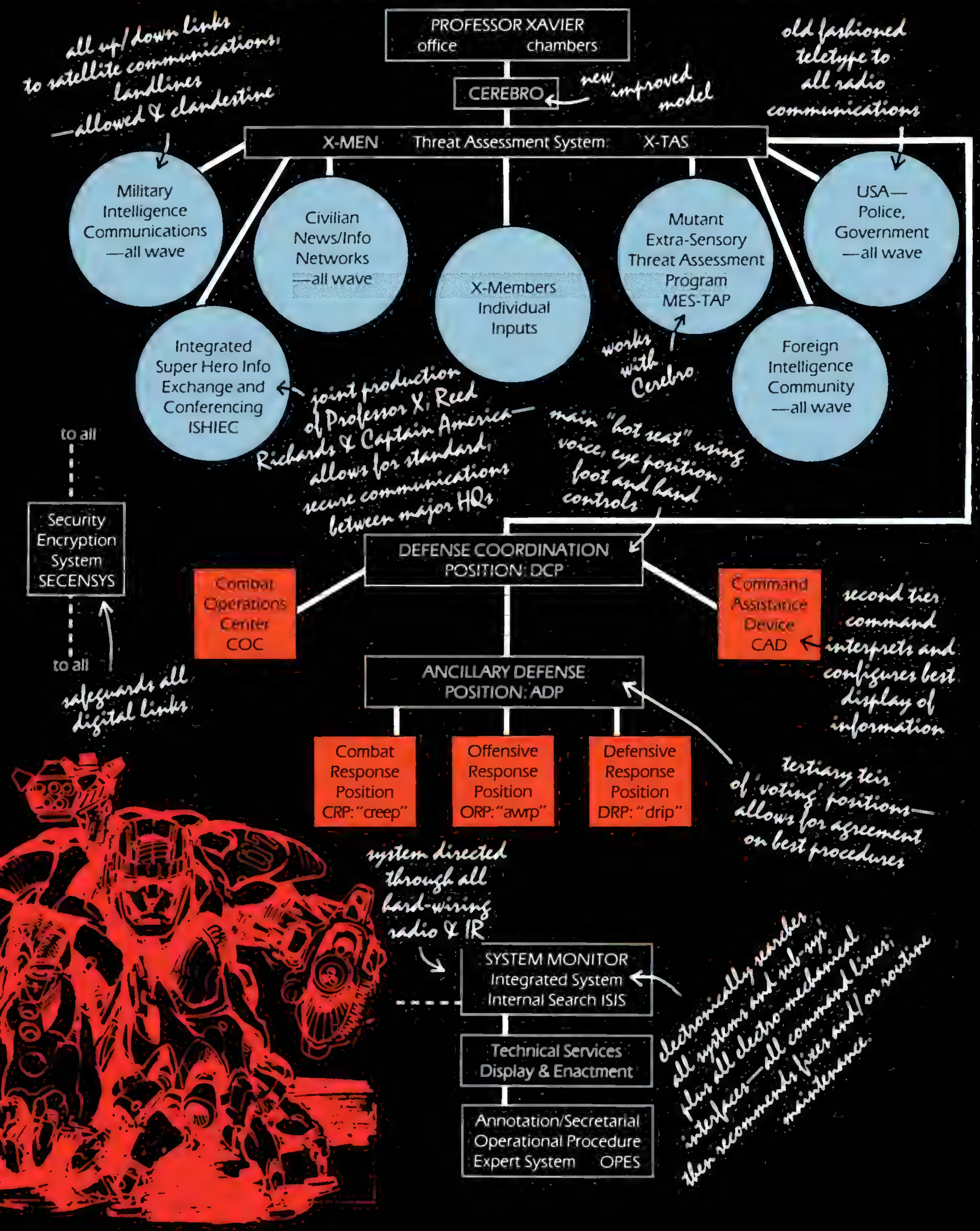
Jousting with Corsair and the Starjammers, outfoxing Nimrod Sentinels across a post-apocalyptic landscape, or combatting any number of threats limited only by your imagination, it is easy to forget the reason this place is called the Danger Room. Students are nonetheless encouraged to employ the holographic technology as skill levels dictate.

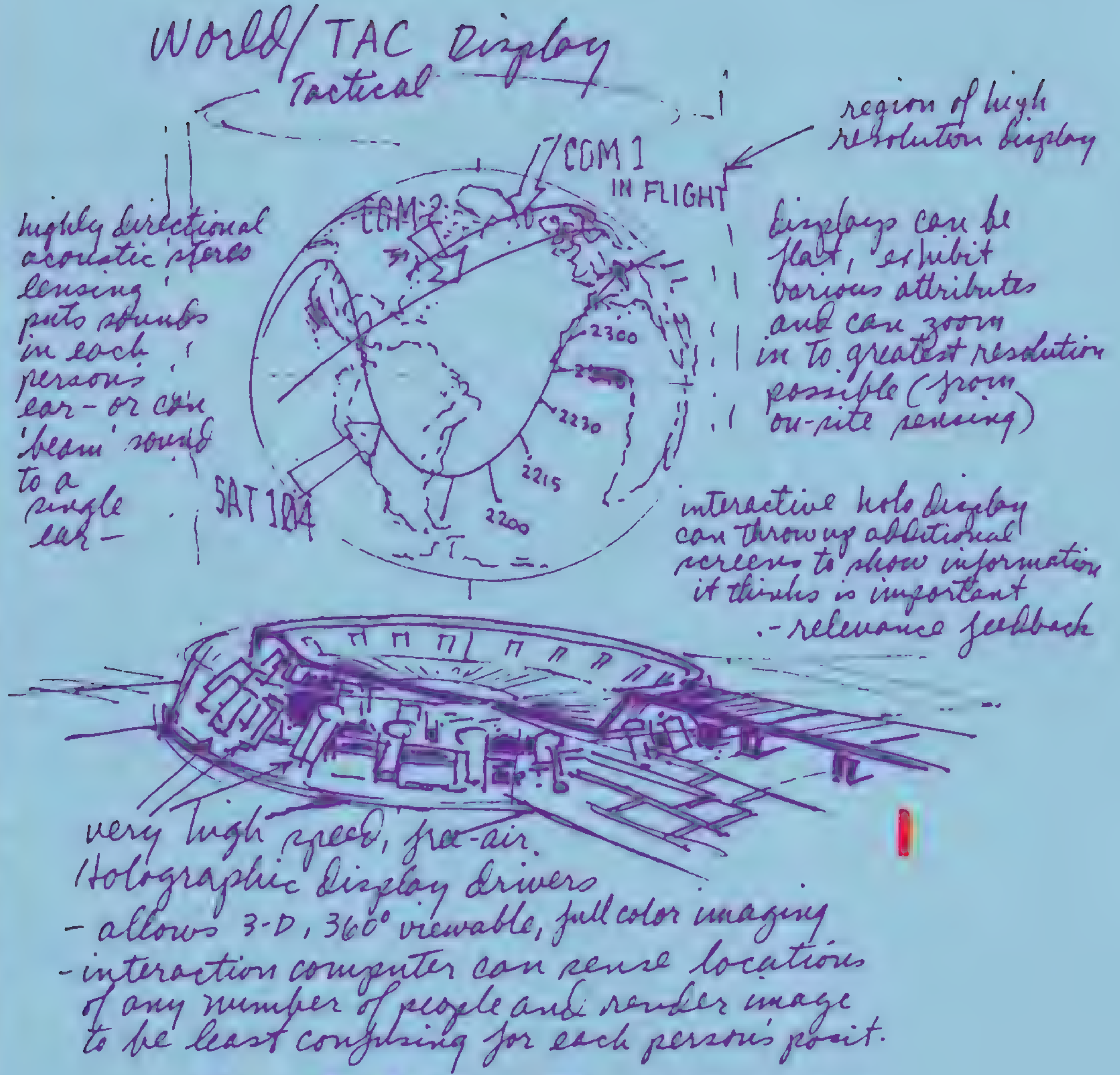
The Danger Room World View Library can be used for basic gymnastic workouts which include no holographic display (primary level Alpha 1). This is the most basic program designed with novices in mind. There are over 120 levels of increasing difficulty in the Danger Room computers. The hologram library files begin on level 21 Beta.

NOTE: While I do not subscribe to this theory myself, Dr. MacTaggert argues that continued exposure to reality simulation may dull one's sensitivity to danger rather than sharpen it. In deference to her expertise on combat related stress and post-trauma orientation, Holo-specific Danger Room participation is restricted to thirteen hours a week.

COMBAT OPERATIONS CENTER

Organizational Component Breakdown


PROFESSOR XAVIER
office chambers
CEREBRO
new, improved model
X-MEN Threat Assessment System: X-TAS
all up/down links to satellite communications, landlines —allowed & clandestine
old fashioned teletype to all radio communications
Military Intelligence Communications —all wave
Civilian News/Info Networks —all wave
X-Members Individual Inputs
Mutant Extra-Sensory Threat Assessment Program MES-TAP
USA— Police, Government —all wave
Integrated Super Hero Info Exchange and Conferencing ISHIEC
Foreign Intelligence Community —all wave
works with Cerebro
joint production of Professor X, Reed Richards & Captain America— allows for standard, secure communications between major HQs
main "hot seat" using voice, eye position, foot and hand controls
to all
Security Encryption System SECENSYS
to all
safeguards all digital links
DEFENSE COORDINATION POSITION: DCP
Combat Operations Center COC
Command Assistance Device CAD
second tier command interprets and configures best display of information
ANCILLARY DEFENSE POSITION: ADP
Combat Response Position CRP: "creep"
Offensive Response Position ORP: "awrp"
Defensive Response Position DRP: "drip"
tertiary tier of 'voting' positions— allows for agreement on best procedures
system directed through all hard-wiring radio & IR
SYSTEM MONITOR Integrated System Internal Search ISIS
electronically searches all systems and sub-sys plus all electro-mechanical interfaces—all command lines; then recommends fixes and/or routine maintenance.
Technical Services Display & Enactment
Annotation/Secretarial Operational Procedure Expert System OPES


World/TAC Display
Tactical
region of high resolution display
COM 1
IN FLIGHT
COM 2
highly directional acoustic stereo lensing puts sounds in each persons ear—or can 'beam' sound to a single ear—
displays can be flat, exhibit various attributes and can zoom in to greatest resolution possible (from on-site sensing)
2300
2230
2215
2200
SAT 104
interactive holo display can throw up additional screens to show information it thinks is important .—relevance feedback
very high speed, free-air Holographic Display drivers
—allows 3-D, 360° viewable, full color imaging
—interaction computer can sense locations of any number of people and render image to be least confusing for each person's posit.

W/TAC DISPLAY
RESPONDS TO SPECIAL SOFTWARE
THAT MIMICS HUMAN INTUITION--
USING ALL INPUTS FROM CEREBRO,
MES-TAP AND **X-TAS**

WAR ROOM

I have spent an inordinate amount of time trying to derive an alternate designate for the "War Room." It has been my fervent wish, long before the formation of the X-Men, that hostilities be avoided at all costs, be it human vs. mutant or mutant vs. mutant. In recent years, however, I have become painfully aware that a war is being waged across the planet Earth — and that we are the first, quite possibly the final, line of defense.

Since the last printing of this manual, the number of mutant fringe groups have increased disproportionately to the membership of the X-Men (X-Factor, X-Force notwithstanding). Where there was once the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, Factor Three, the Inner Circle of the Hellfire Club, and later the Morlocks, we have recently witnessed the introduction of the Horsemen of the Apocalypse, the Upstarts, the Acolytes, the Mutant Liberation Front, the so-called Nasty Boys, and the Dark Riders. This does not even include the ever-evolving army of government manufactured Sentinels, the threat of Project: Wideawake, or the paramilitary mutant-hating "Friends of Humanity." To pretend we are not at war — to hide behind euphemisms — would be misleading and, worse case scenario, fatal.

the WAR room

1
2
3
4
5
6
7

FULL SYSTEM ANALYSIS COMPUTER
(MAIN FRAME)

all above and below ground sensor/comm lines, optical lines, all electro-mechanical interfaces, all on-line computers
all units SECENSYS encoded to sense user ID by galvanic, capacitance and low-level/non-intrusive brain scan
foveal detection system 7°
7°
chair adjust

DEFENSE COORDINATION POSITION–DCP

"voting" lockout authorized only by COC duty officer or Prof X.
communication ground sensor space sensor select menu
weapons board
mutual "go" needed to launch fire
left + right "mobo" must vote to release offensive weapons/personnel
pop-up alert holo display
step down
Defense Coord. Viewscreen
edge-aligned exposed microcircuit display – ultra high resolution/refresh rate
foveal detection system allows for greatest detail where eye is most sensitive
Also serves as primary Training Coordination Station – in conjunction with ADPs
peripheral vision enhancement

TOTAL SYSTEM ANALYSIS–
RUNS 3.7 SECONDS

SPECIALIST DESK–
ALLOWS PROFESSOR X OR OTHER VISITOR TO INTERACT WITH ENTIRE COMBAT OPERATIONS CENTER

comm. link menu
major status display with visual comm capacity
combat option display
self-illuminating, can be voice-controlled, use 'point-and-shoot' fingertip menu control
keyboard + "mouse" hand control
fiber-optic command link
System configuration controls – allows all command + control panels to be re-arranged
entire desk is monolithic computer which also ~~provides~~ provides image-enhancement for COC sub-displays

COMBAT OPERATIONS CENTER–COC

raised platform allows for complete viewing of entire War Room – Major situation display in opposite direction
~~extendable – variable keyboard~~ configurable display
hand held command unit
hand controller unit
command assistance devices
Tag-along CAD
simple racked modules – slide in-out for quick replacement
need 8: houses finger response interpretation computer units

COMBAT RESPONSE POSITION
("CREEP")

PERSONAL HOLO DISPLAY
(MAIN FRAME)

finger buttons
not visible from behind
thumb switch

ANNOTATION-SECRETARIAL TERMINAL–
COLLATES MISSION PROBLEMS AND COMPUTER GLITCHES.

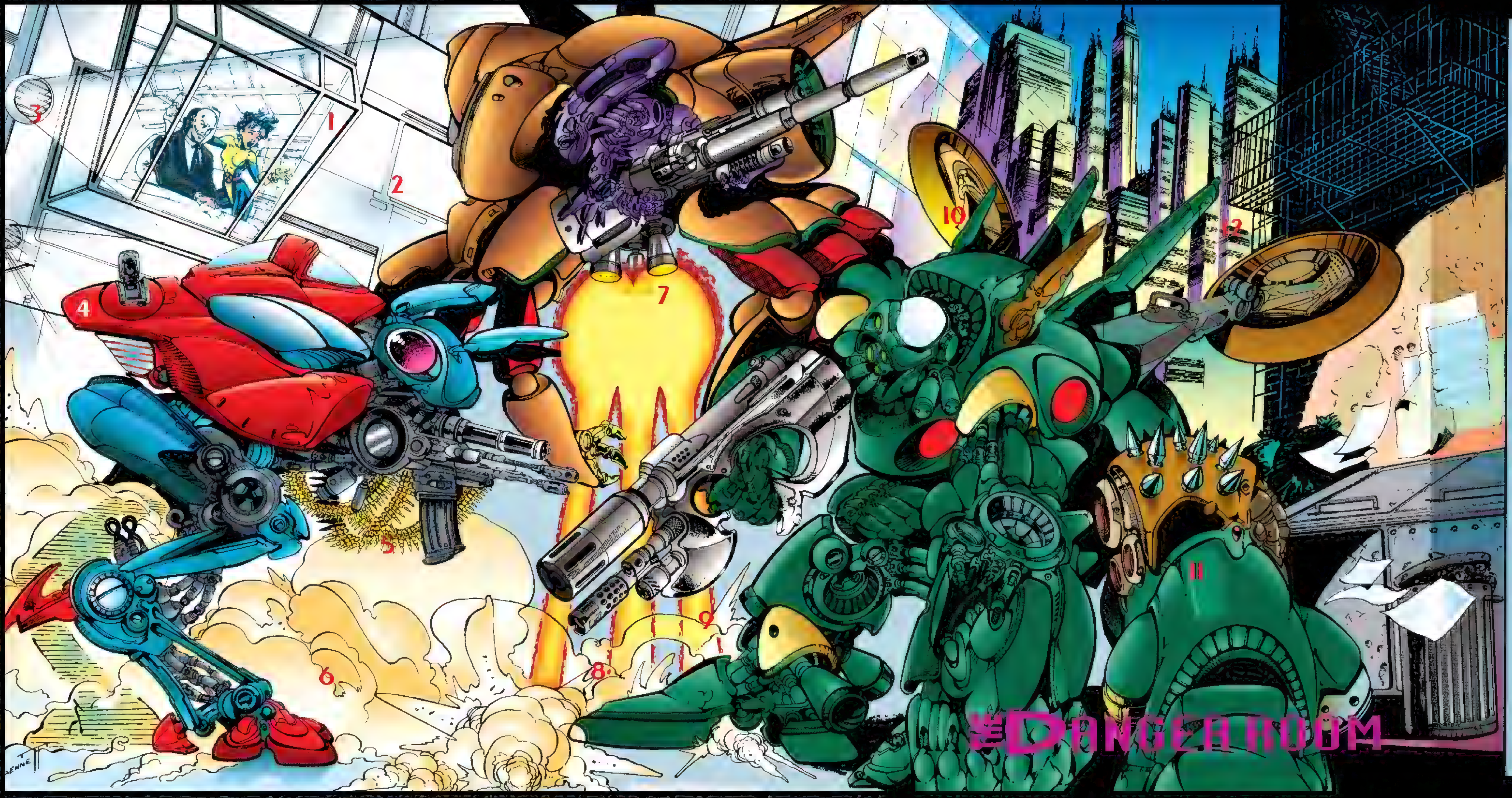
Annotation Center
combat style 15 image display
Keyboard
sets up re-supply, [illegible]

The War Room itself constantly monitors all broadcast information networks, ranging from NORAD Central Command to S.H.I.E.L.D. Intelligence, to the nightly news. From the F.A.A. flight patterns for every airport in the United States, to personnel files for England's MI6, and the former Soviet Union's KGB. High speed scans extract that information from these sources which is applicable to our mission and our goals. I have every confidence that the intelligence system we have at our disposal is second to none.

While it may appear unseemly and disturbing that we are engaged in the borrowing of such information, it must be stressed that accessing this data has proven vital to our survival on many occasions. We live in difficult times and moral choices of questionable nature are unfortunately the result. Rest assured this information is never used in any illegal manner.

SECURITY NOTE: Various safeguards have been built into the system ranging from varying frequency modulators and computer viruses to nanotechnology. Most are based on Shi'ar design and augmented by the X-Man, Forge, to act as buffers between our information systems and our network of infotaps. In this way we are assured no intelligence gathering organization can trace their security leaks back to us.

SIDENOTE: The War Room computer is on constant interface with the secured computer in the ready room where more private sources of information are processed.



1 **DANGER ROOM MASTER CONTROL**--Direct Viewport. Viewing is 'one way' with highly directional active photon filtering (APF). APF functions by tuning a forcefield so that the incident wavefront is altered to follow the room programming.

2 The basic Danger Room in/out system is maintained in the original **SHI'AR FAST PROCESSING COMPUTERS**–parts of which cover the entire inner surface of the Danger Room. Heating and cooling is all electronic.

3 **MOBILE LASER CLUSTER HEADS** are moved over the Danger room's surface to facilitate the placement of gravity lenses and associated effects.

4 Solid surfaces with thoroughly realistic appearances are achieved with accurate surface texture modeling laid on polygonal surfaces of **OVERLAPPING GRAVITY FIELDS.**

5 **'PROJECTILES'** are composed of rapidly moving and tightly focused pressor beams (force fields). Can be made non-lethal by reducing momentum signature–thus awareness of being hit is maintained without loss of life.

6 **EXTENSIVE FILES AND MODELLING PROGRAMS** allow for a great variety of realistic environmental as well as atmospheric and dust effects.

7 **PROGRESSIVE WAVED TRACTOR/PRESSOR BEAMS** allow for realistic exhaust/wind effects.

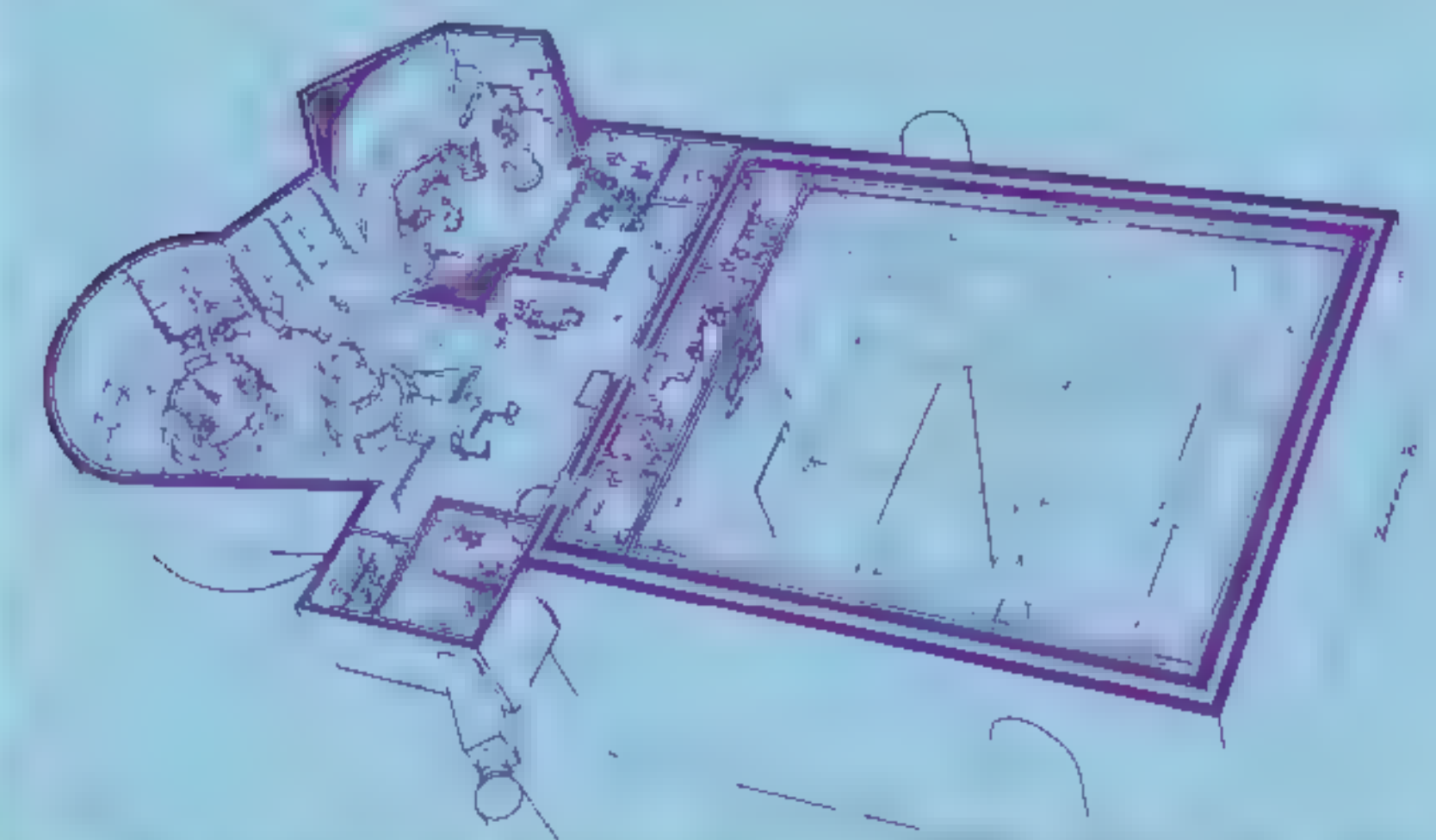
8 Projected **PINPOINT GRAVITY LENSES** allow simple laser beams to be redirected as other light sources.

9 **PRESSER BEAM ACOUSTIC ENGINES AND LENSING** allows for accurate noise level and frequencies.

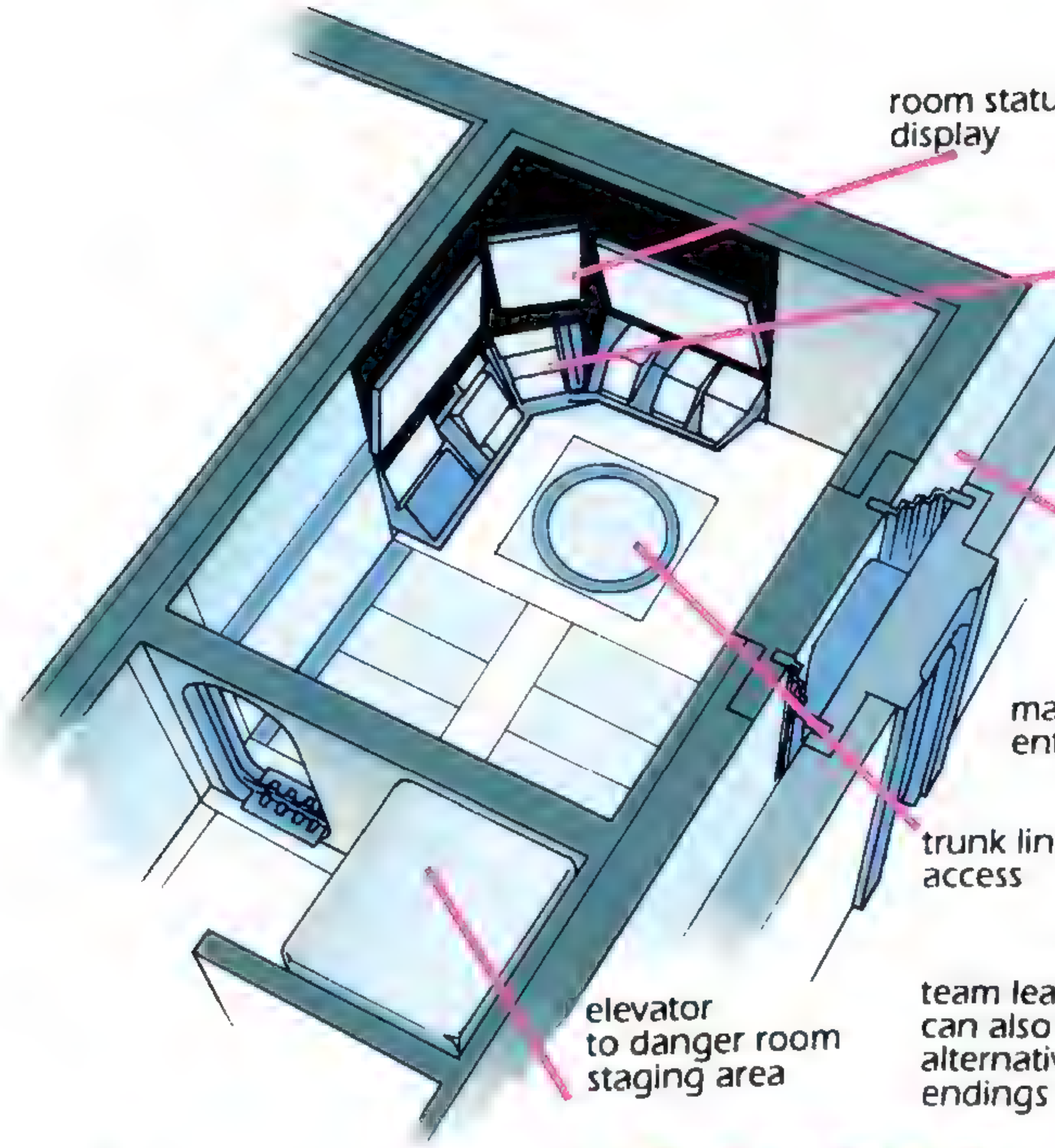
10 **TARGETING AND COMMUNICATIONS ANTENNAE** accurately modeled using gravity lensing–allows for direction-finding and ranging.

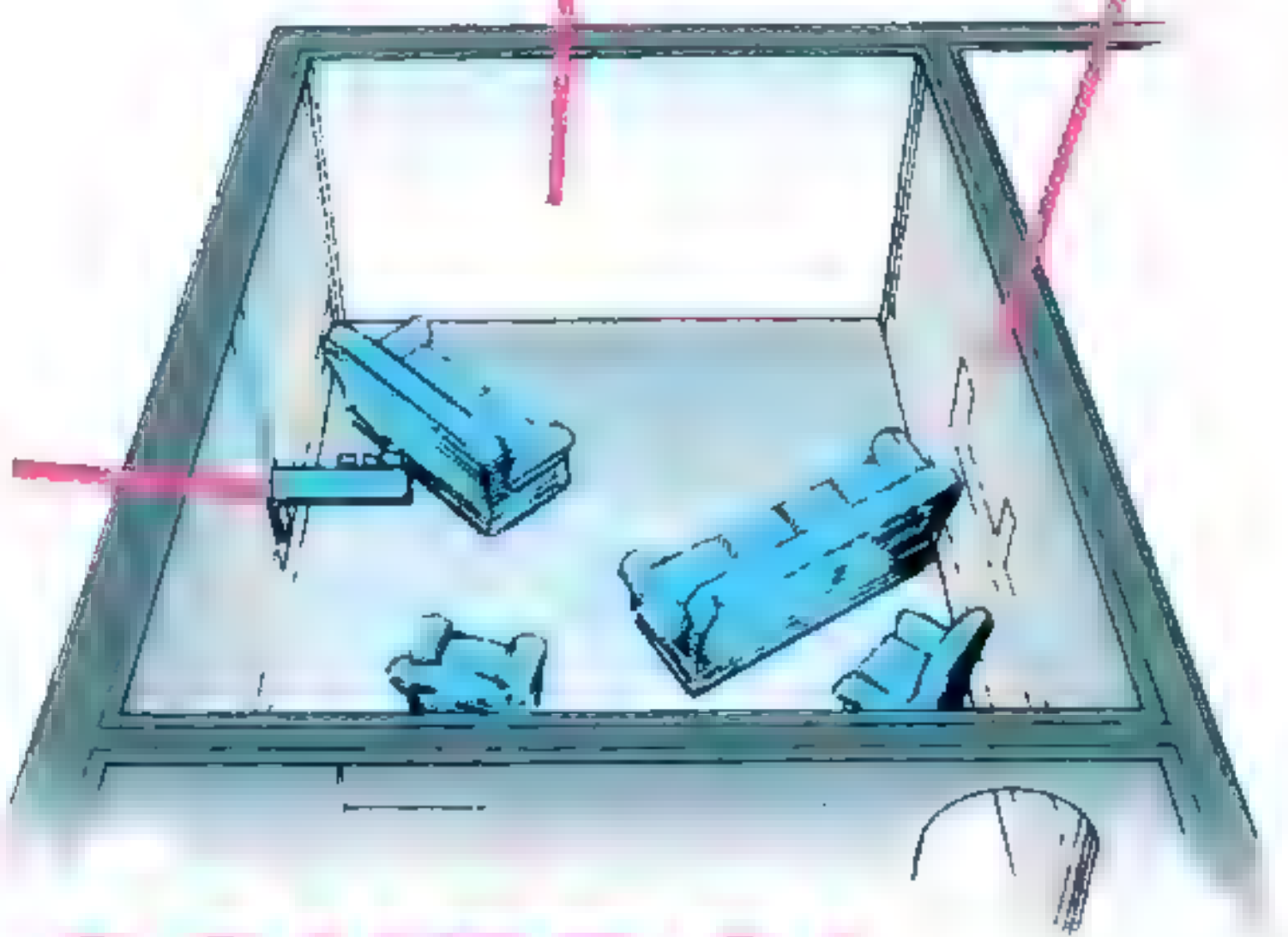
11 The Danger Room can synthesize random danger elements from its **INTERNAL LIBRARY** of weapons files, alien combat files, or random danger generator.

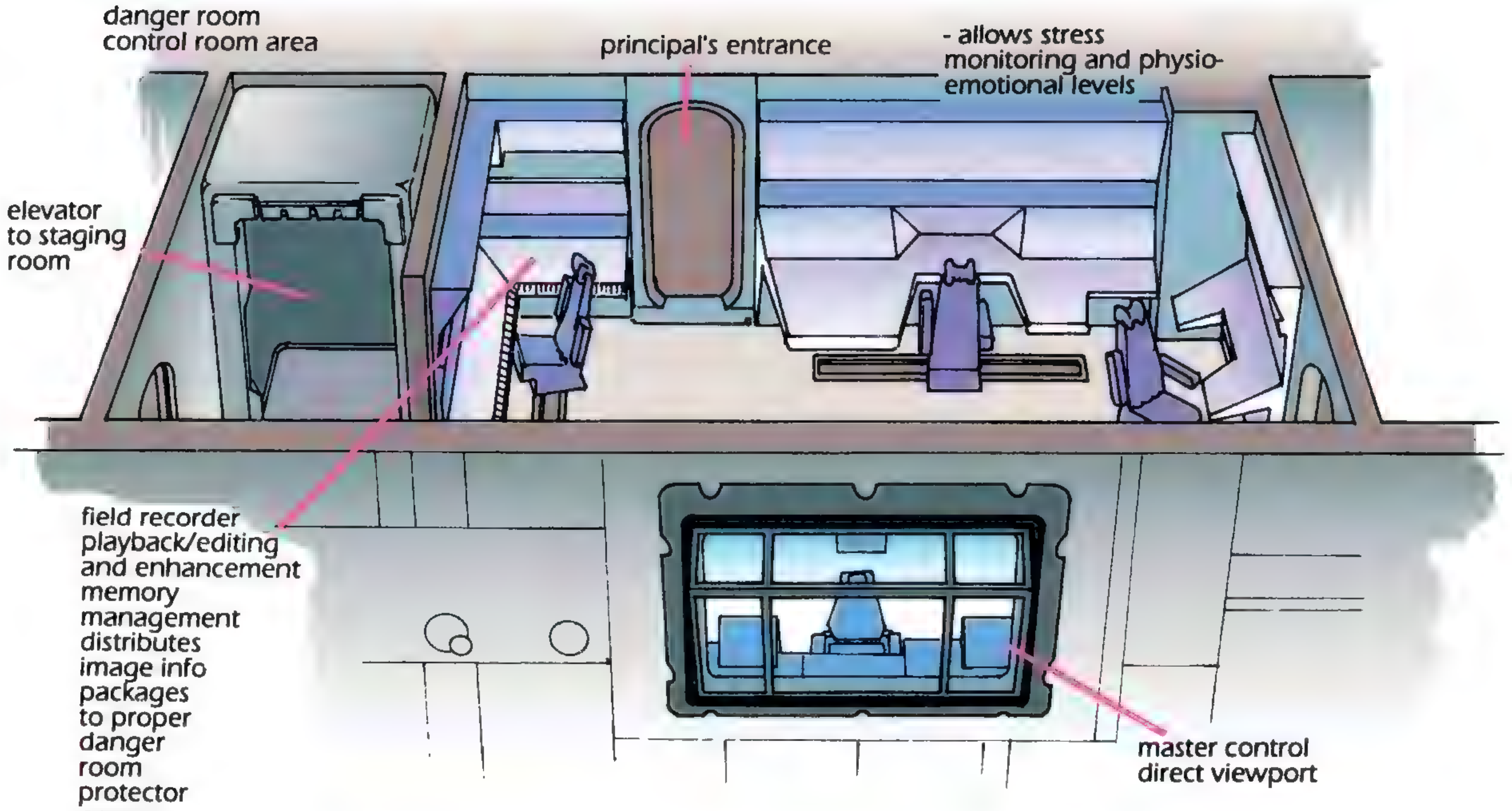
12 **DANGER ROOM WORLD VIEW MODEL LIBRARY** has digital models of over 50 million objects and their attributes, included are: garbage cans (plus sub-elements) and buildings.



NOTE: Hologram file 117 gamma/subfile Brood can be altered to suit one or several participants. This is an example of the Danger Room being operated at an extremely high level of danger.


room status display
information cascade buffers and processors
door seals
main entrance
trunk line access
elevator to danger room staging area

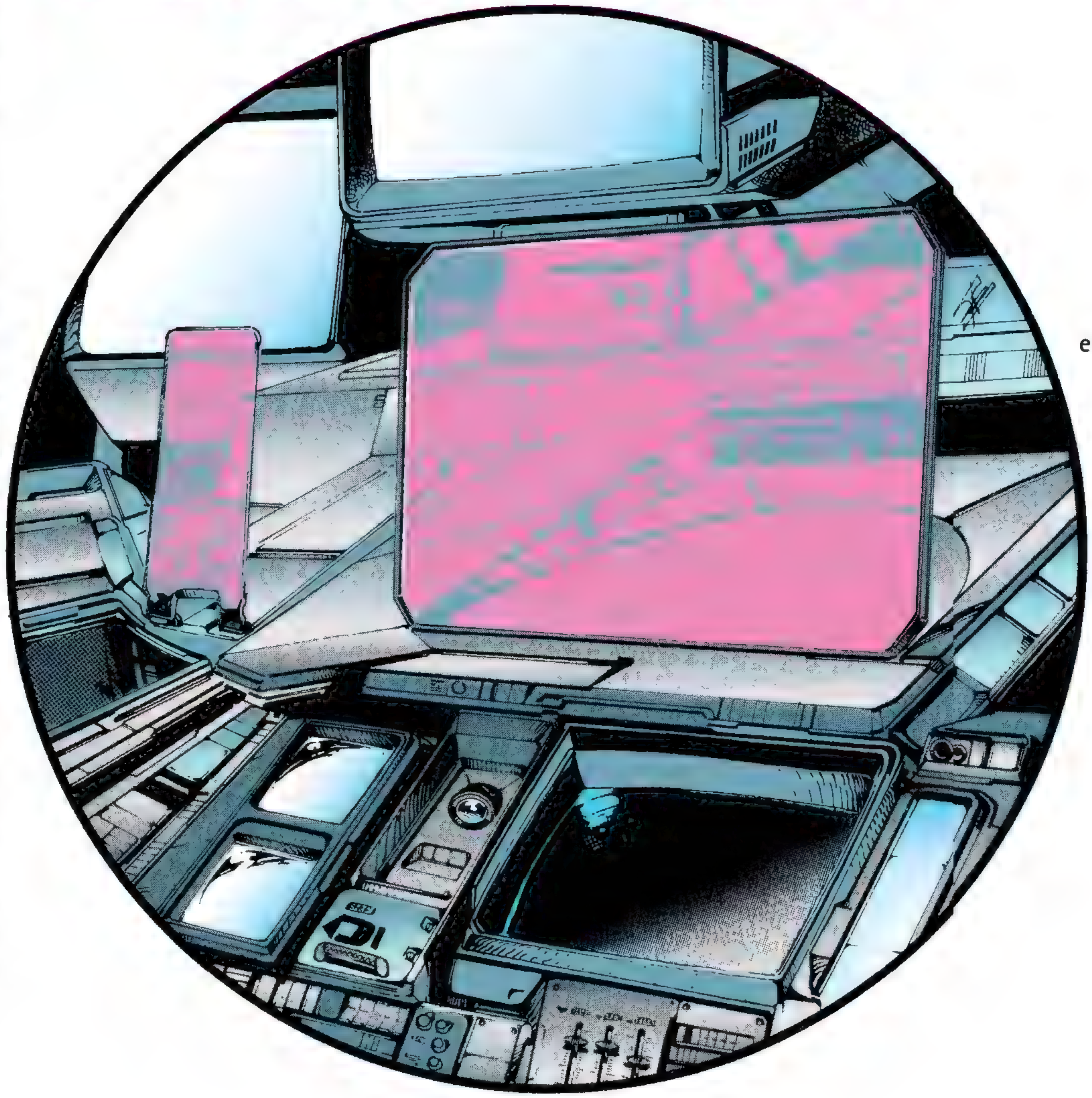

users can go straight to staging without pre-loading programs
options include auto format prof. x. design random event with known and unknown members
danger room de-briefing room
unless team members are hospitalized, this room is used for immediate analysis of combat performance
synthsense 3-d image port
team member interface
prof. x. interface
team leader can also display alternative scenario endings

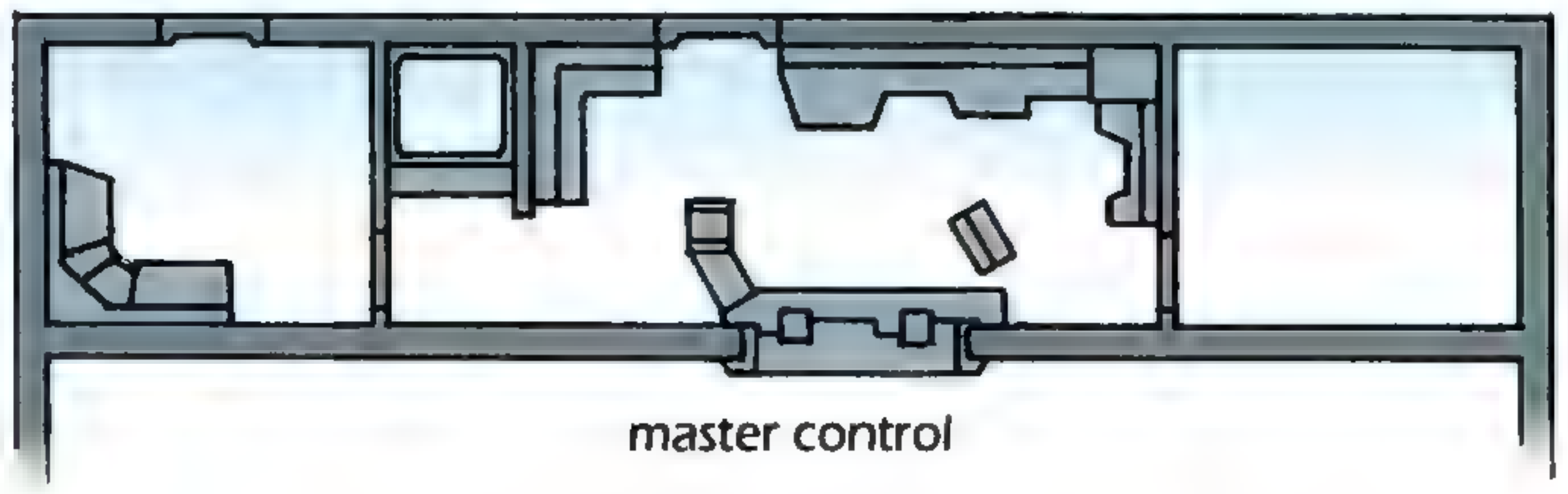

danger room control room area
principal's entrance
- allows stress monitoring and physio-emotional levels
elevator to staging room
field recorder playback/editing and enhancement memory management distributes image info packages to proper danger room protector group
master control direct viewport

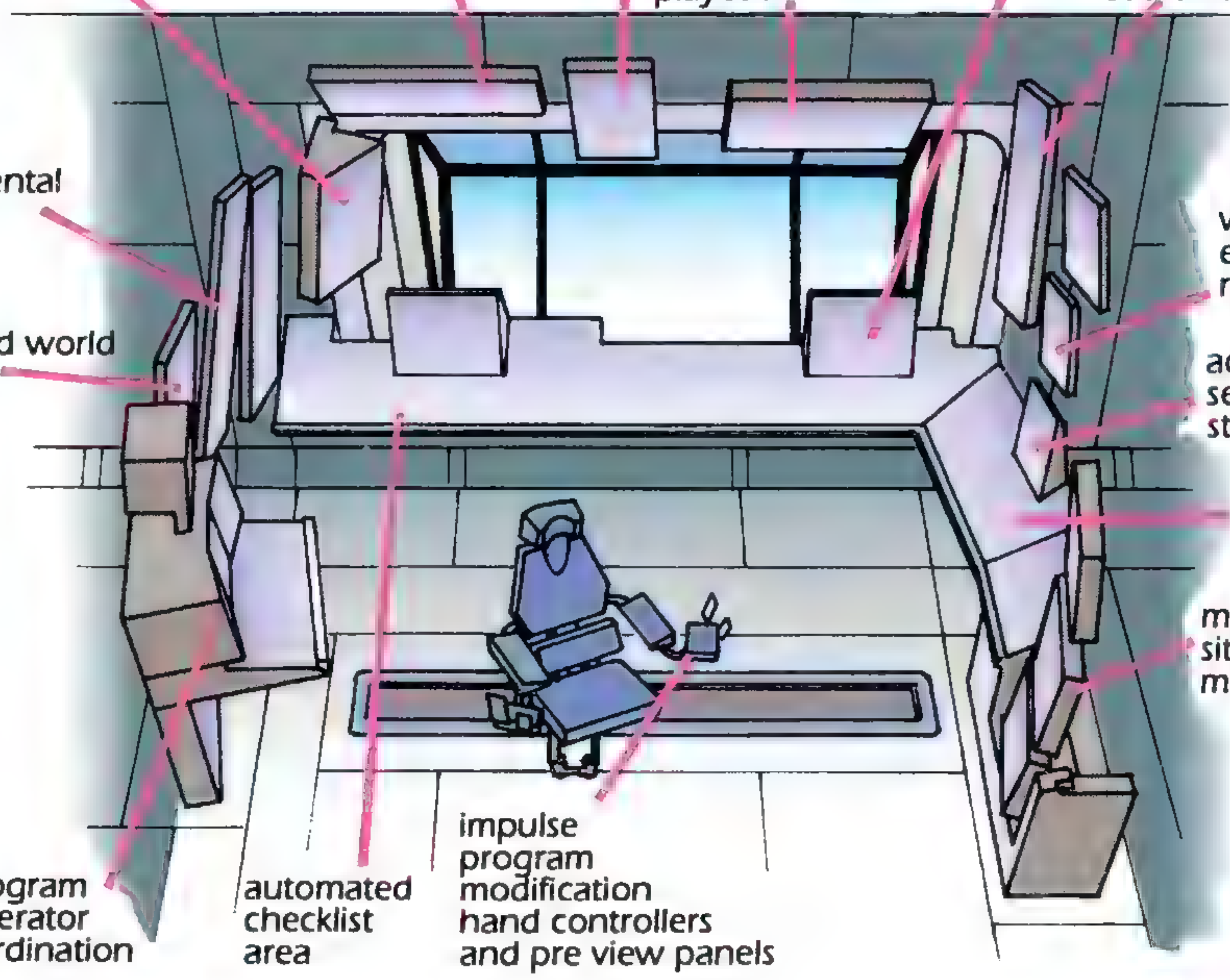
DANGERroomCONTROLannex

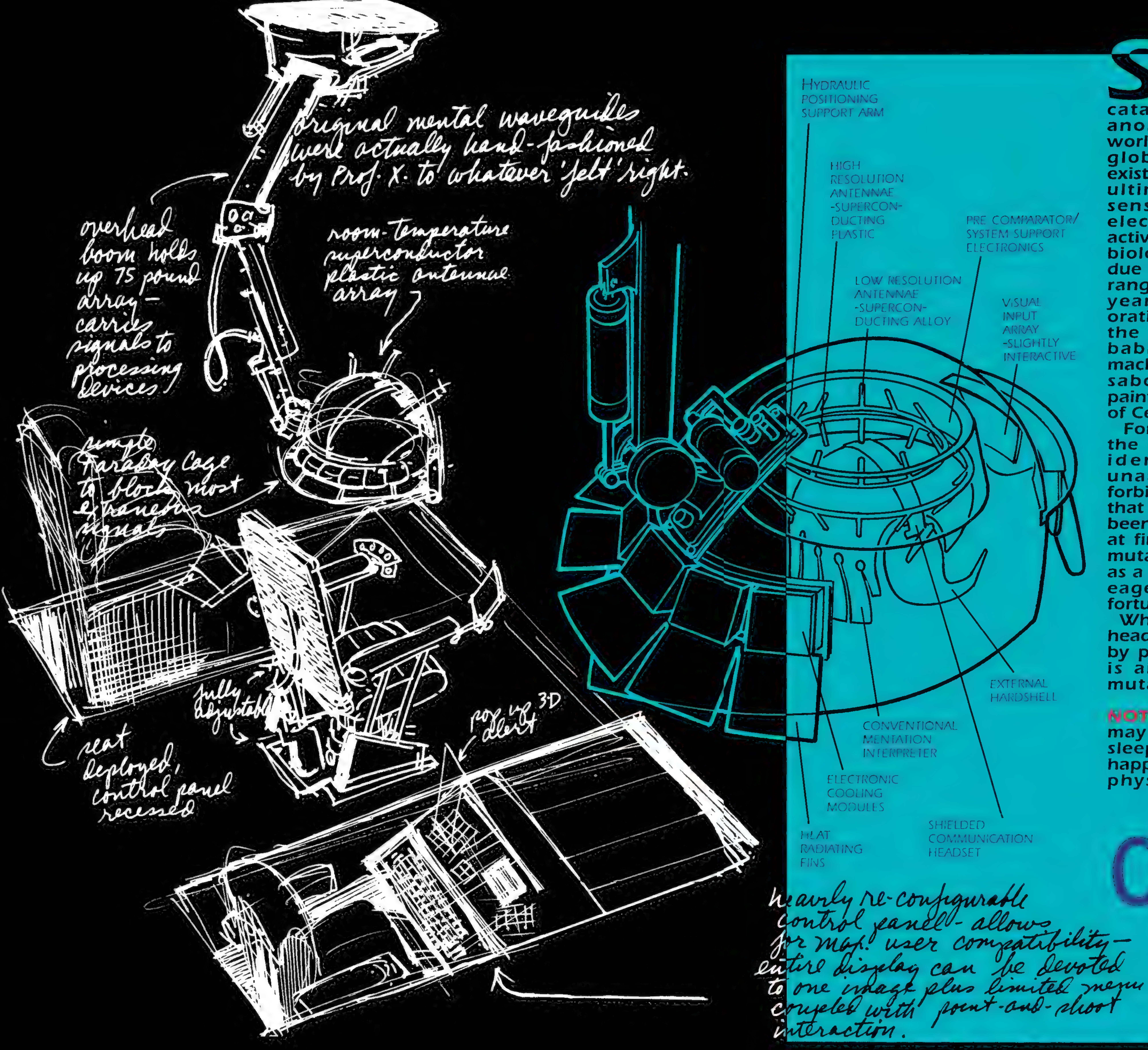
To the untrained eye it is a featureless room. To anyone who enters it, however, and engages its systems–it is clear that the Danger Room is the ultimate battle simulator.

Behind unassuming gray paneled walls exist a multitude of exercise and combat paraphernalia designed to put even the most well-trained mutant through their paces. (Laser cannons, omnium spring vices, pyrotechnic extension lances and sensory deprivation cocoons are only a handful of Shi'ar based hardware secreted within.) Recently combined with Shi'ar holographic technology, the Danger Room can assume a three dimensional interactive environment conducive to the constant refinement of teamwork vital to the X-Men's daily operations.




control room area
ready room
de-briefing room
master control


danger room master control
memory management repeater
translational position sensor display
energy usage evaluation
on the fly field recorder playback modifier
alert panel
gravitic projector coordinators
weather/ environmental simulator
worldview emulator routines
synthesized world patterns
active sensing status
user interaction articulation engine
multi-position situation mapping
impulse program modification hand controllers and pre view panels
hologram generator coordination
automated checklist area



original mental waveguides were actually hand-fashioned by Prof. X. to whatever 'felt' right.
overhead boom holds up 75 pound array—carries signals to processing devices
room-temperature superconductor plastic antennae array
simple Faraday Cage to block most extraneous signals
fully adjustable
pop-up 3D alert
seat deployed, control panel recessed
HYDRAULIC POSITIONING SUPPORT ARM
HIGH RESOLUTION ANTENNAE -SUPERCONDUCTING PLASTIC
PRE COMPARATOR/ SYSTEM SUPPORT ELECTRONICS
LOW RESOLUTION ANTENNAE -SUPERCONDUCTING ALLOY
VISUAL INPUT ARRAY -SLIGHTLY INTERACTIVE
EXTERNAL HARDSHELL
CONVENTIONAL MENTATION INTERPRETER
ELECTRONIC COOLING MODULES
SHIELDED COMMUNICATION HEADSET
HEAT RADIATING FINS
heavily re-configurable control panel—allows for max. user compatibility—entire display can be devoted to one image plus limited menu coupled with point-and-shoot interaction.

Since the earliest days of its creation, Cerebro was thought to be the ultimate means with which to catalogue and track genetic anomalies anywhere in the world. Constantly sweeping the globe by piggy backing pre-existing satellite projections, this ultimate mutant detector is sensitive to aberrations in electromagnetic brain wave activity most often attributed to biological mutations. Whether due to the prolific increase in the range of mutations over recent years, environmental deteriorations such as the erosion of the ozone layer, or the improbable event of orchestral machinations by any number of saboteurs, we have become painfully aware of the limitations of Cerebro.

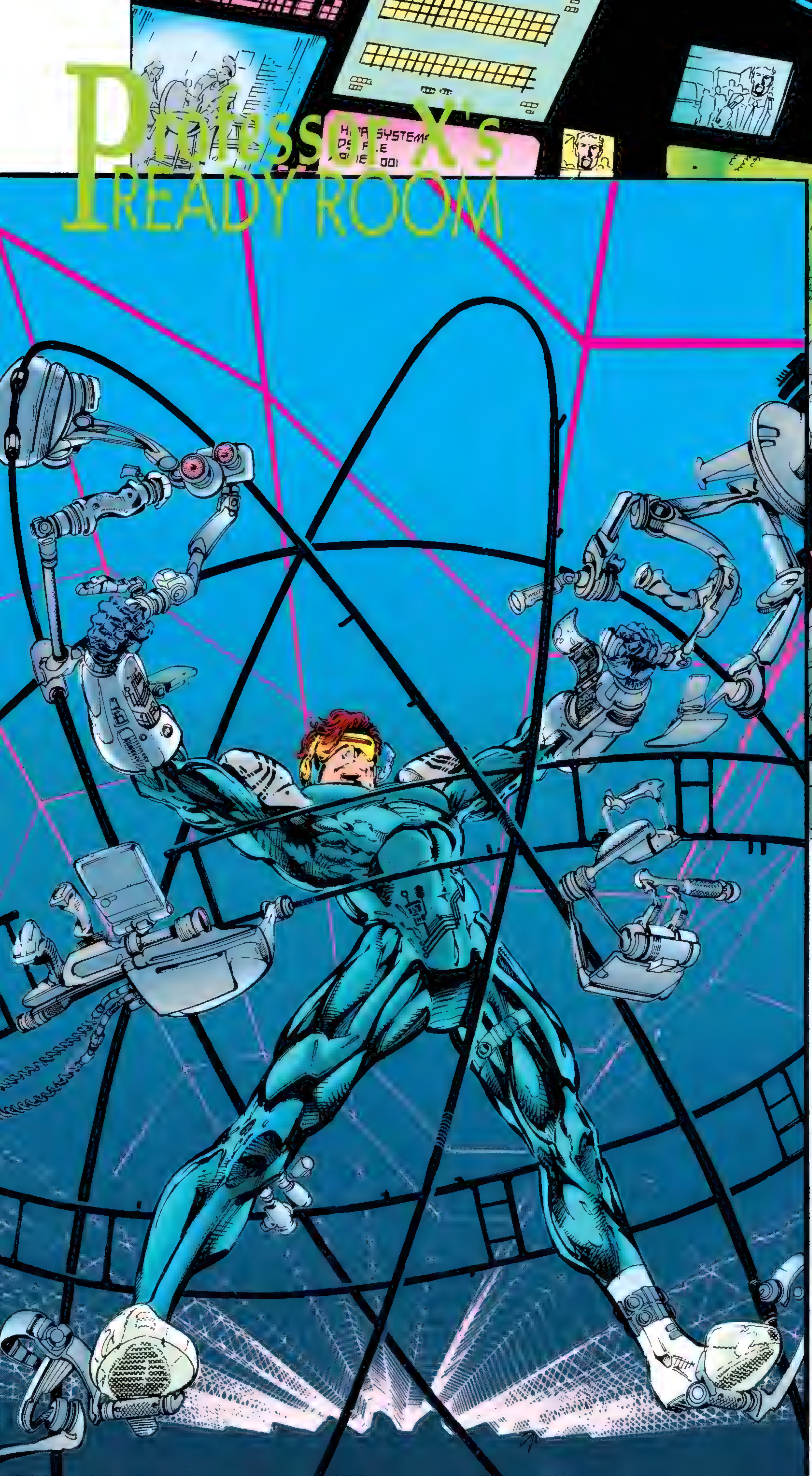
For your protection—as well as the classified subjects currently identified by Cerebro—unauthorized use is strictly forbidden. (In the unlikely event that the computer's integrity has been compromised, any attempt at first contact with a suspected mutant could conceivably serve as a beacon to an outside agency eager to establish a less than fortuitous relationship.)

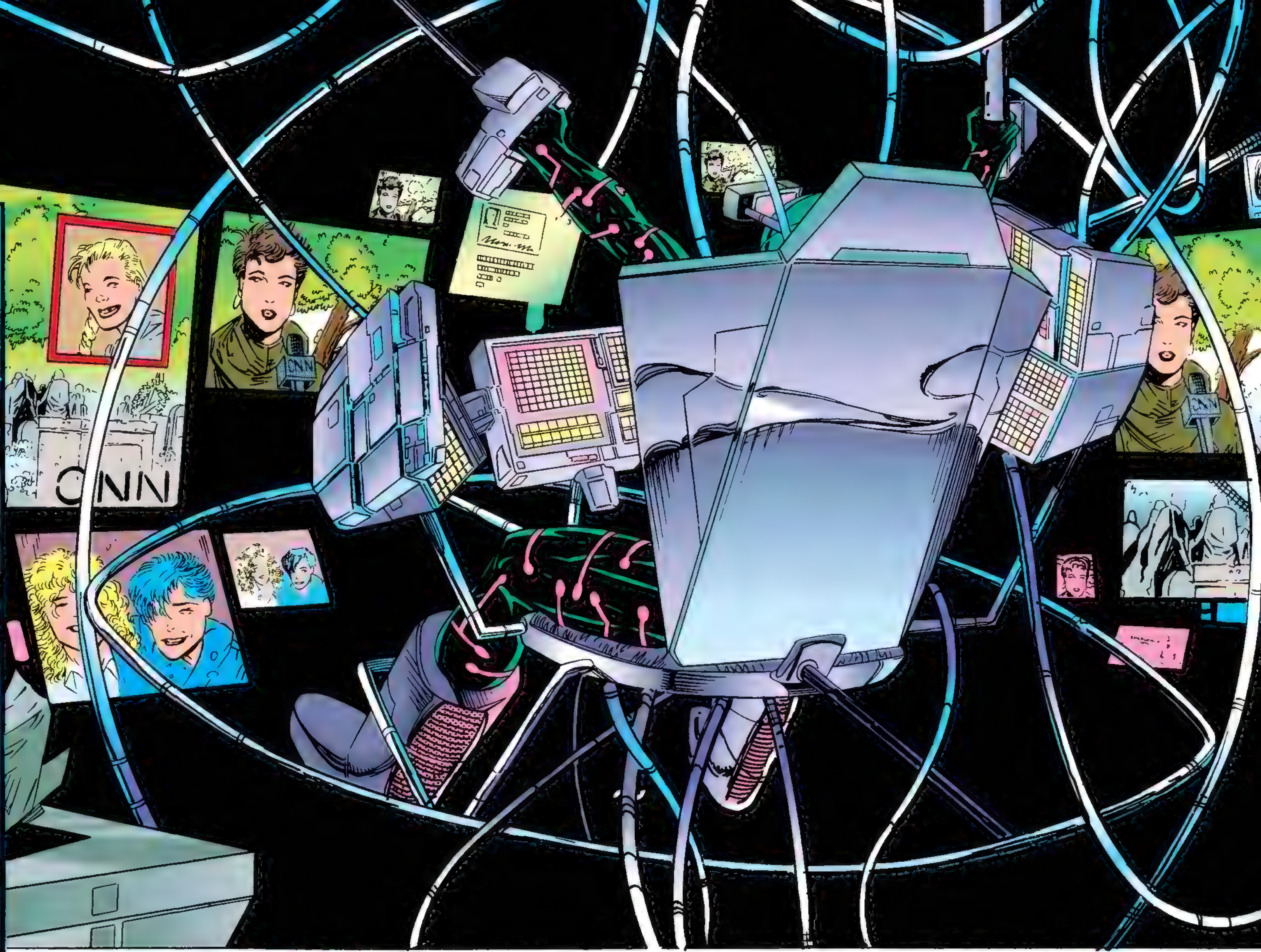
While the computer's interactive headpiece is more easily wielded by psi-sensitive mutants, Cerebro is also user friendly to non-mutants with proper training.

NOTE: Extended use of Cerebro may result in a low-grade REM sleep irritation. If that should happen, please consult a campus physician before further use.

CEREBRO

Professor X's READY ROOM





THE NERVE CENTER

The mansion's most highly secured location provides instant access to everything from the Danger Room failsafe programs, to the War Room information override, to Mansion Security parameters. It's most important feature, however, is the interactive-CEREBRO augmentation chamber.

Highly sensitive files and documents from allies, both human and mutants, are stored here. There are several failsafe devices to ensure that these files will not be accessed. All computer coded messages coming in from underground operatives are filtered through here. So as not to betray the confidences of people who risk much for me and mine, no other computer in the mansion can accept or decode these messages. So sensitive is this area it is the only chamber equipped with self-destruct sequences. Any unauthorized entry will result in expulsion.

Until recently, I was the only resident of the mansion aware of the existence of the Ready Room. . .preferring to use the facility as a private study, a sanctum sanctorum from which to occasionally escape the mantle of leadership. With the ever escalating confrontations between increasingly volatile mutant factions, I have come to appreciate the need for an open door policy between myself and senior members of the X-Men.

This room has been designed for a psi-sensitive. Non psi-sensitive individuals can utilize some of this equipment with special psionic enhancers. This room is restricted and will only allow entrance to field commanders who have been trained to utilize this room at its highest functioning level.

If it is true, and I believe it is, that "knowledge is power" — the Ready Room is, unequivicably the most powerful room in the mansion.

MED LAB

Originally constructed to house a scrub room, an operating theatre, a burn unit, an intensive care ward, and a homo-superior sensitive physical and occupational therapy department, the X-Men's ongoing relationship with the Shi'ar Empire has propelled the Med-Lab's capabilities farther than I had ever imagined. Recent additions of the alien technology include holographic diagnostics, sub-epidermal cloning, and techno-organic tissue bonding.

Ideally, this is the room in which the residents of the mansion should spend the least amount of time (outside the context of a teaching environment). Should circumstances arise that necessitate a visit to the Med-Lab as a patient, you'll discover it is a full service facility capable of accommodating every aspect of the medical arts and science known to man — and several that are not.

Though any number of specialists are on call twenty-four hours a day, we have discovered over the years that there is very little that cannot be handled "in house." NOTE: All extraneous off-campus medical personnel have been cleared on a Tertiary Security Level and should be considered "mutant friendly."

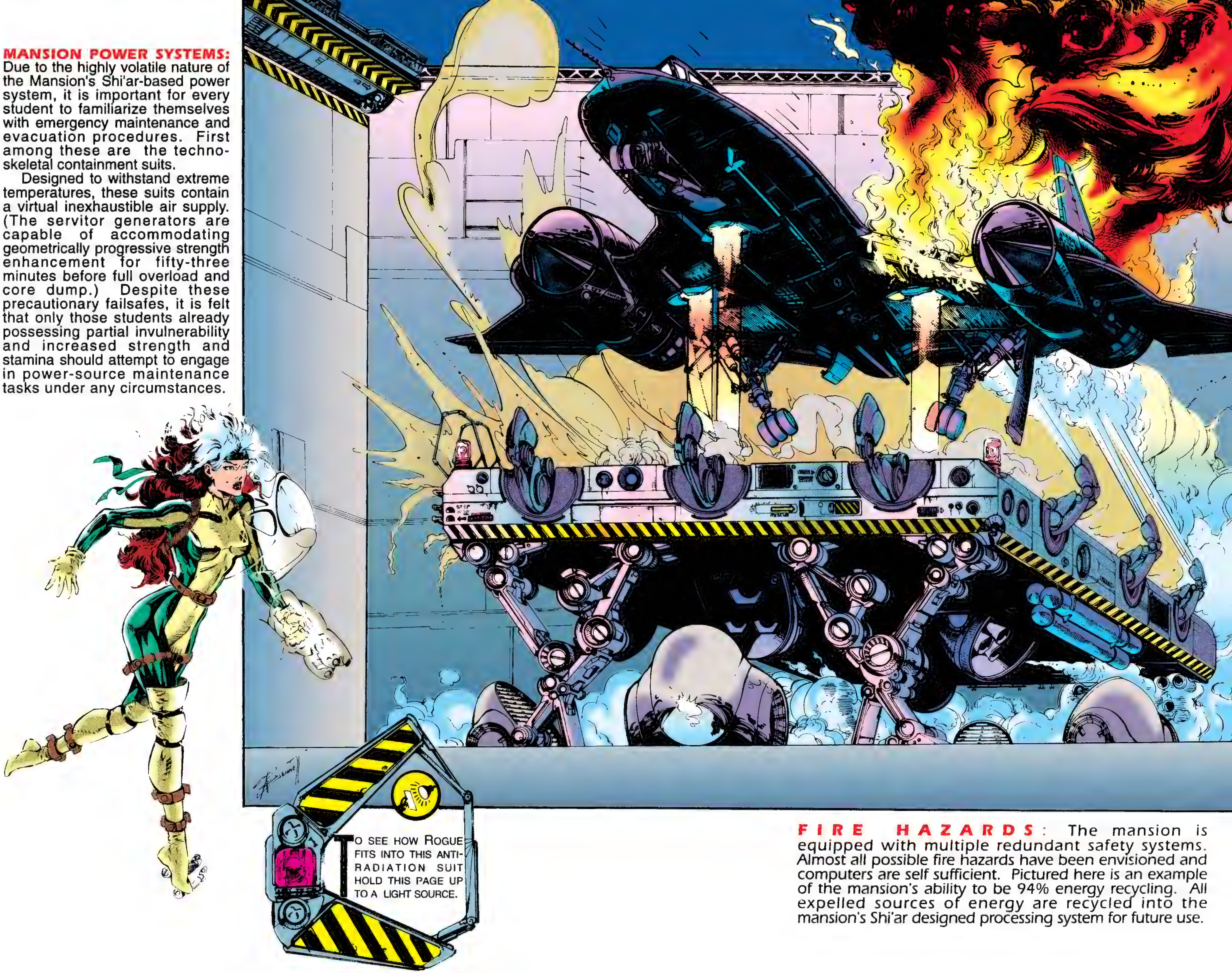
Every undergraduate student will be required to spend seventy-two hours a semester interning in the Med-Lab. This will count as 23% of your final grade. Extra-credit assignments in the past have included such research essays "Designer Genetics" by Henry McCoy, "Why?" by Katherine Pryde, and "Binary Diagnostic Encoding" by Douglas Ramsey.

02
MUTANT EMERGENCY
STEP

in CASE OF emergency

MANSION POWER SYSTEMS: Due to the highly volatile nature of the Mansion's Shi'ar-based power system, it is important for every student to familiarize themselves with emergency maintenance and evacuation procedures. First among these are the techno-skeletal containment suits.

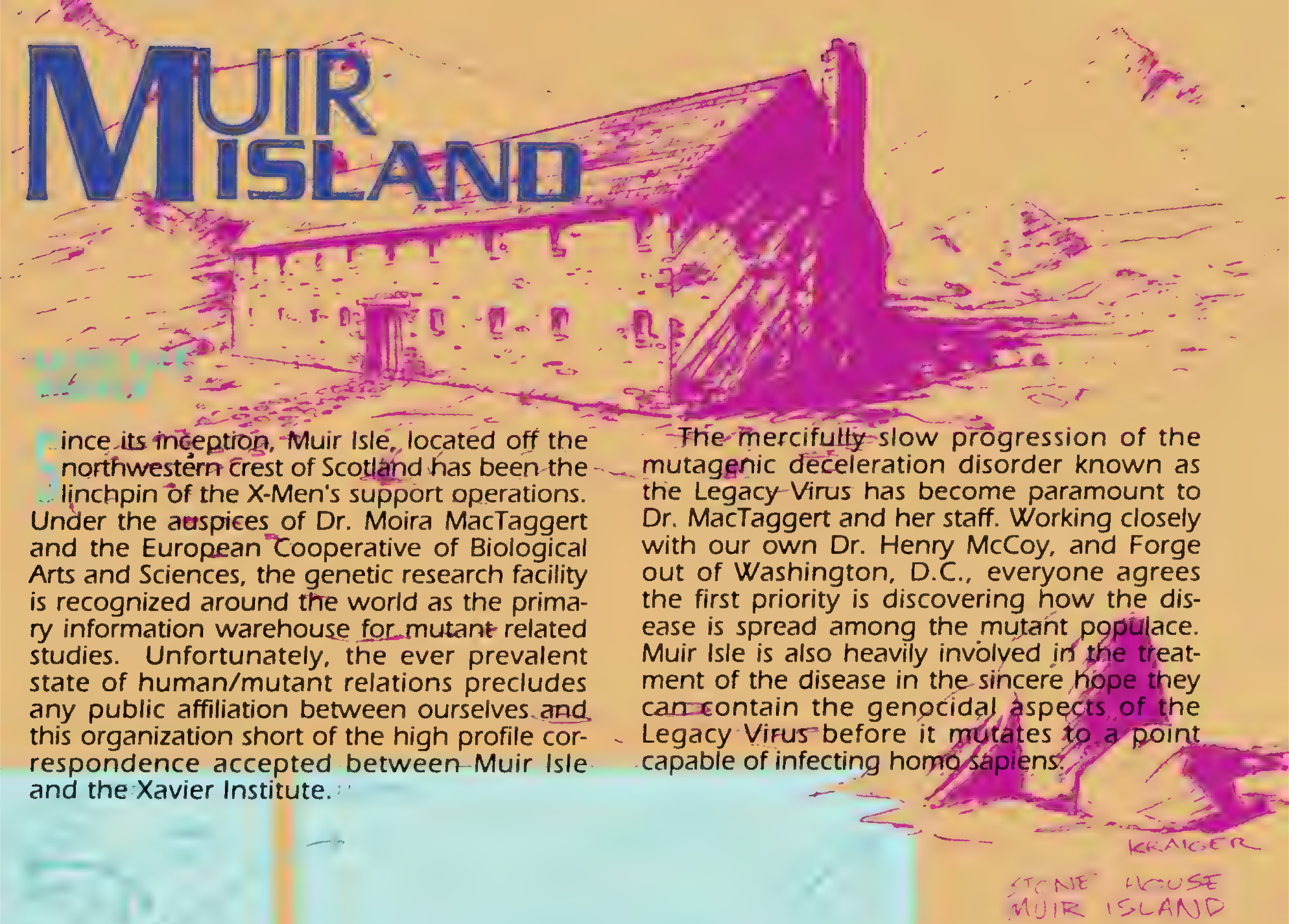
Designed to withstand extreme temperatures, these suits contain a virtual inexhaustible air supply. (The servitor generators are capable of accommodating geometrically progressive strength enhancement for fifty-three minutes before full overload and core dump.) Despite these precautionary failsafes, it is felt that only those students already possessing partial invulnerability and increased strength and stamina should attempt to engage in power-source maintenance tasks under any circumstances.



TO SEE HOW ROGUE FITS INTO THIS ANTI-RADIATION SUIT HOLD THIS PAGE UP TO A LIGHT SOURCE.

FIRE HAZARDS: The mansion is equipped with multiple redundant safety systems. Almost all possible fire hazards have been envisioned and computers are self sufficient. Pictured here is an example of the mansion's ability to be 94% energy recycling. All expelled sources of energy are recycled into the mansion's Shi'ar designed processing system for future use.

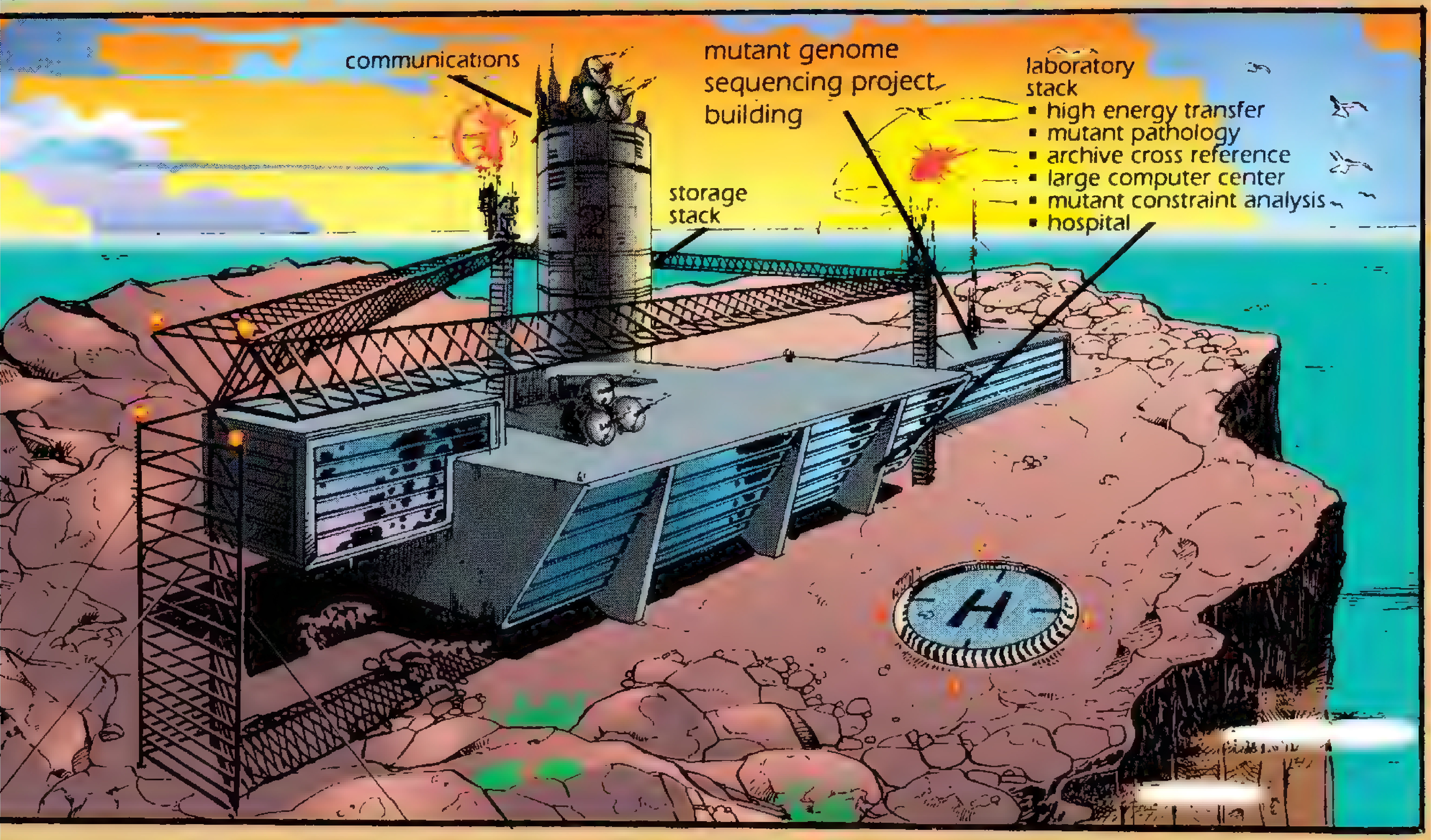
MUIR ISLAND


KRAIGER
STONE HOUSE
MUIR ISLAND

Since its inception, Muir Isle, located off the northwestern crest of Scotland has been the linchpin of the X-Men's support operations. Under the auspices of Dr. Moira MacTaggert and the European Cooperative of Biological Arts and Sciences, the genetic research facility is recognized around the world as the primary information warehouse for mutant related studies. Unfortunately, the ever prevalent state of human/mutant relations precludes any public affiliation between ourselves and this organization short of the high profile correspondence accepted between Muir Isle and the Xavier Institute.

The mercifully slow progression of the mutagenic deceleration disorder known as the Legacy Virus has become paramount to Dr. MacTaggert and her staff. Working closely with our own Dr. Henry McCoy, and Forge out of Washington, D.C., everyone agrees the first priority is discovering how the disease is spread among the mutant populace. Muir Isle is also heavily involved in the treatment of the disease in the sincere hope they can contain the genocidal aspects of the Legacy Virus before it mutates to a point capable of infecting homo sapiens.

NOTE: A two month internship is available to all third year students having completed the necessary prerequisites. For an application, please come see me at anytime.


communications
mutant genome sequencing project building
laboratory stack
• high energy transfer
• mutant pathology
• archive cross reference
• large computer center
• mutant constraint analysis
• hospital
storage stack
H

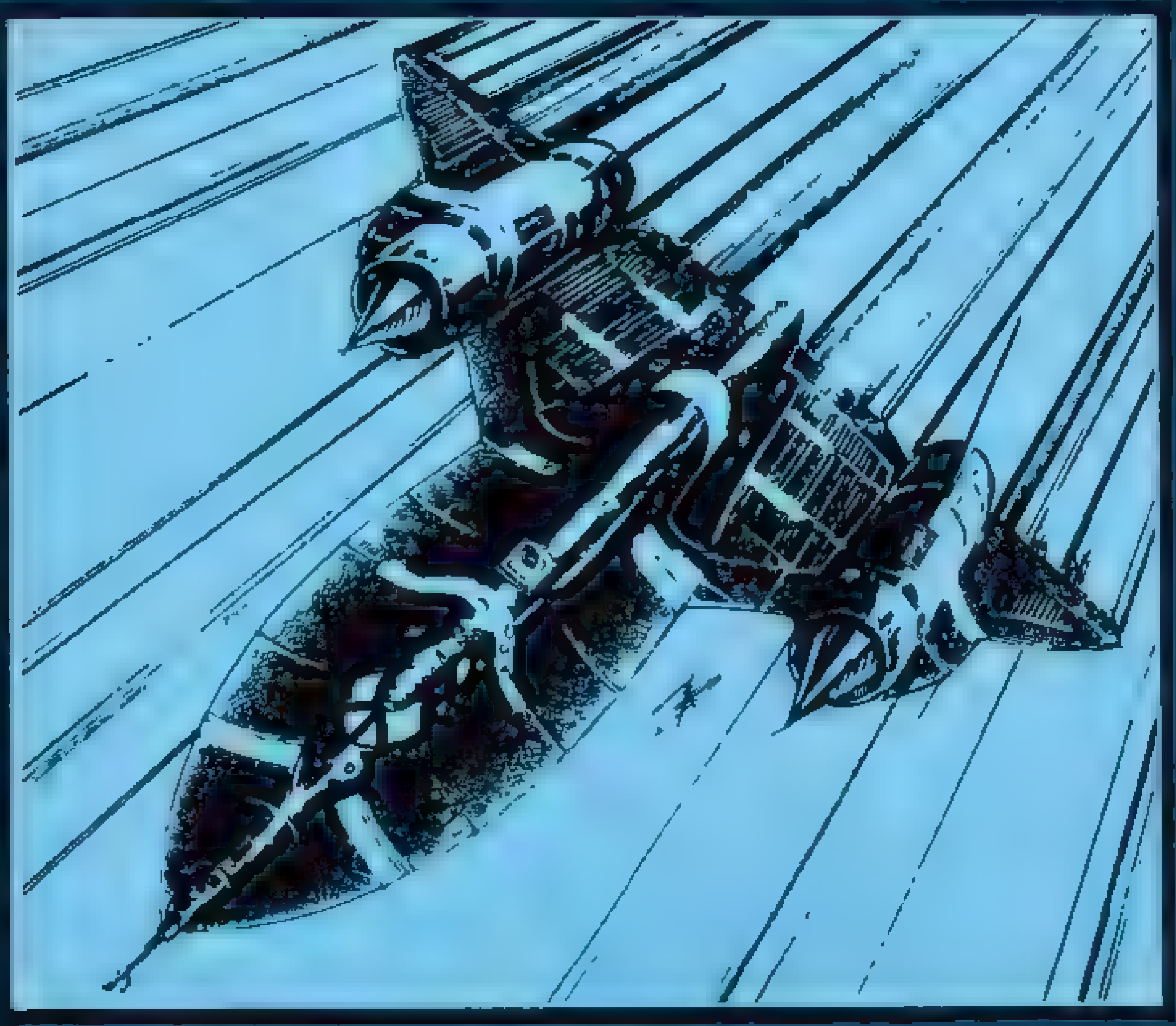
Dr. MacTaggert has spent a lifetime concentrating her formidable intellect and resources on unlocking the key to genetic anomalies. Before its partial demolition and recent reconstruction, Muir Isle engaged in the study of many of the world's most powerful mutants. On occasion, and over the strenuous objections of Dr. MacTaggert, the complex has been used as a temporary holding facility for certain criminally inclined mutants.

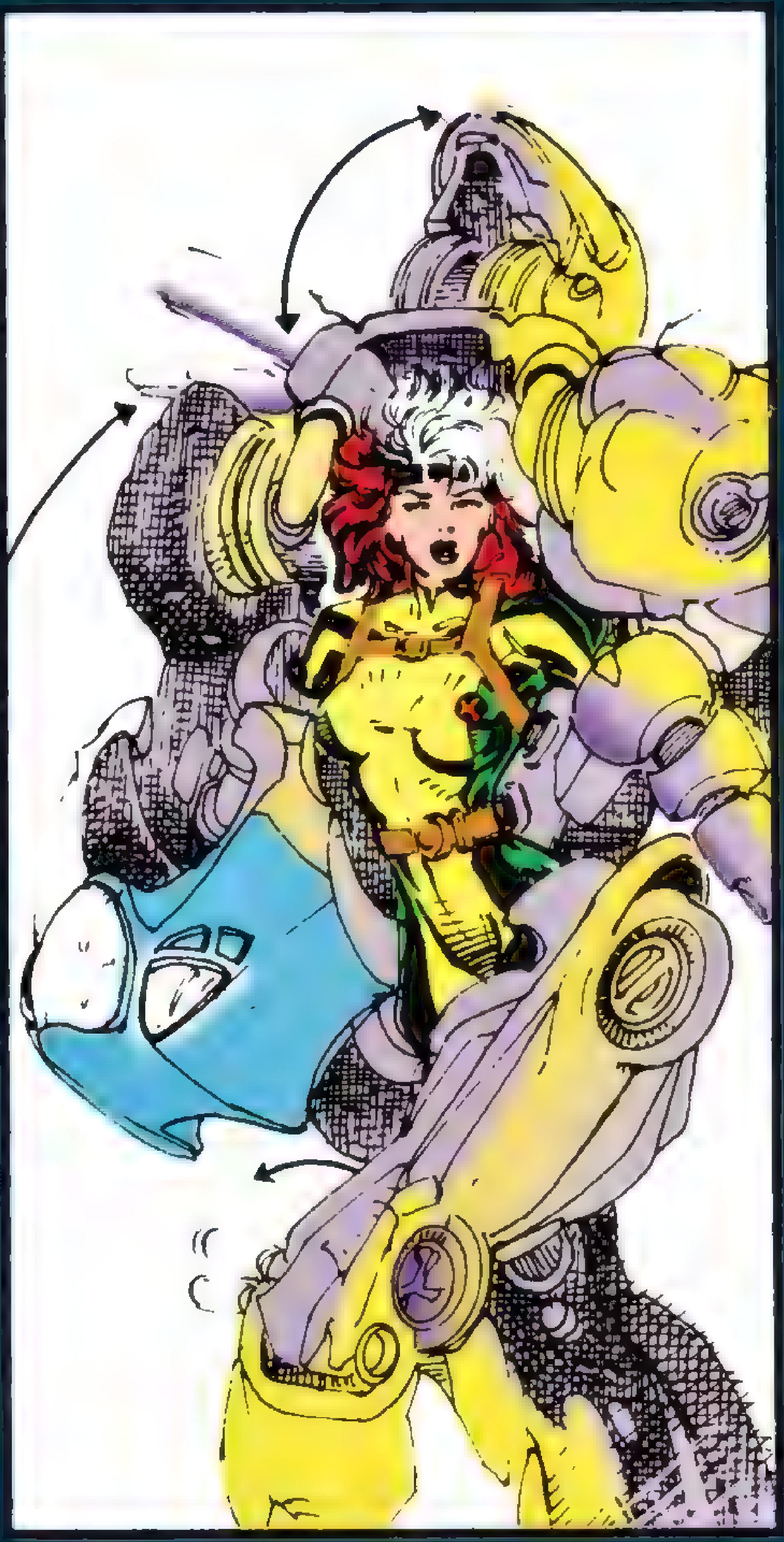
MASSACHUSETTS ACADEMY

Under our current expansion plans, the Xavier School for Gifted Youngsters is scheduled to relocate to the former Massachusetts Academy shortly. Once a private school in Snow Valley, nestled away in the Berkshire Mountains, this new complex will now act as the new cornerstone in the next stage of the dream, Generation X. Current plans call for Sean Cassidy, long time adjunct member of the X-Men, to take over as headmaster for our Massachusetts campus.

It's your first day at the Xavier Institute for Higher Learning, the Westchester mansion which serves as the home and training center of the X-Men. You've been introduced to Headmaster Professor Charles Xavier, toured the public areas of the estate, and met some of your fellow students.

Now, prepare yourself to travel behind mansion walls to a place that the outside world never sees. Explore the alien technology of the War Room, feel the heat of the Danger Room, and experience first-hand the inner workings that are Cerebro. In short, welcome to the **X-MEN!**





y cage
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adjustable
swing up
don't
group movements - stations
allow for "mechanical"
tracking of targets - latest

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X-MEN: FATAL ATTRACTIONS PROMOTIONAL POSTER BY BOB LARKIN

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AUGUST 1993
$1.00 US $1.25 CAN 80p UK
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE CA AUTHORITY
Making the Mutant Holograms

COVER ART BY GREG CAPULLO & KEVIN CONRAD; SCULPTURE BY DARIO GRANGROTH; PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTOPHER EBEL

3-D Mutants

The making of the X-Men anniversary holograms

Less than a year ago, Marvel commemorated the 30th anniversary of Spider-Man with holograms on each of the four Spider-Man titles, in an event that was described as "hard to top." The upcoming X-Men anniversary celebration, featuring state-of-the-art holograms on all of the X-Men titles, just might top the web-slinger's celebration. While both events feature holograms made from three-dimensional models, the X-Men holograms will be produced by Polaroid Corporation with an exclusive technology that yields the best and brightest three-dimensional images currently available.

The anniversary storyline focuses on Magneto's return to Earth, and each hologram will feature a key player in the struggle. Each anniversary issue will feature a different hologram and a wrap-around cover.

The first hologram (featuring Havok by Joe Quesada) appeared on X-FACTOR #92. Holograms will appear on X-FORCE #25 (Cable by Greg Capullo), available in June; UNCANNY X-MEN #304 (Magneto by Greg Capullo), on sale in July; X-MEN #25 (Gambit by Andy Kubert), set for August; WOLVERINE #75 (Wolverine by Adam Kubert) out in September; and on EXCALIBUR #71 (Nightcrawler by Joe Maduriera), slated for September. Each of these books will be 48-page issues priced at $3.50, except for UNCANNY X-MEN #304 and WOLVERINE #75, which will be special, oversized issues priced at $3.95 each.

As with the Spider-Man holograms, the X-Men holograms start out as specially commissioned flat artwork that is given to a sculptor/painter who will translate each piece as a three-dimensional statue. The hologram won't be full-color, so the sculptor uses various shades of grey for the greatest possible detail when painting the statue.

Photographs by Christopher Ebel

The Havok statue for X-FACTOR #92, based on artwork by Joe Quesada, was the first to be sculpted.

These views of the Gambit sculpture, based on Andy Kubert artwork, show how the sculptor has to *imply* depth despite how narrow the pieces have to be.

Since these holographic images are made by reflecting a laser beam off of an object and onto a glass photographic plate, and no lenses are involved in focusing the laser, the image cannot be reduced or enlarged. The holographic model must be made the exact same height and width as the finished hologram appearing on the books — 2¼″ × 3½″. Since keeping a three-dimensional model in sharp focus without lenses is very difficult, the model cannot exceed one-half inch in *depth*. Because of this restriction, most of the appearance of depth in a model must be convincingly *implied*, and the model-maker must perform his work without having any way of previewing how it will look in the final holographic image.

These requirements call for a very talented and experienced sculptor, and since the painting of the model is also very tricky work, a very skilled painter, as well. Enter Dario Grangroth, the artist who will be doing all of the models for the X-Men Anniversary holograms (see sidebar).

After a model is finished, it is sent to Marvel, where Dario's vision of how the art should look in three dimensions must meet the approval of the editors. For example, the Cable model appearing on X-FORCE #25 first came to Marvel with the character grinning from ear to ear; he looked like a game show host getting ready to introduce his next contestant. It had to go back to Dario to be given the serious, hard-edge look that is associated with Cable.

Once final editorial approval is given, the model and all of the additional two-dimensional artwork that will be used for backgrounds and special effects are shipped off to the Polaroid lab in Cambridge, MA, for the "origination" of the hologram. The flat art layers and the model are shot individually onto a special silver halide photographic glass plate to form a single hologram viewable only under laser lighting, called the H-1. These glass plates are commercially available, super-high resolution photographic plates usually used for astrophotography and/or micro-lithography, and the plates are developed with fairly standard black-and-white film developing chemistry.

Shooting an H-1 is a very time-consuming task that requires a great deal of skill, experience, and patience in order to create a workable lighting and exposure set-up, and any number of things can go wrong. All of the various mirrors, beam-splitters, prisms, and other optical devices that you see bolted down on the the holography table must be very precisely aligned and arranged for every hologram. The model is lit from four directions at once by a single laser beam that is being split five times. The set-up can take days to perfect. There can be absolutely no vibration whatsoever during the exposure of a holographic plate. The table on which the holography set-up rests weighs 2 *tons* and is suspended on multiple air cushions to insulate it from the normal vibration found in a city, but since the Polaroid holography studio is located within 250 yards of a Boston subway tunnel, when a train is runs close to the building, any holography exposure must be shut down. If everything goes well with the overall set-up, the only other snag that can occur is laser trouble.

The main engine of any holography studio is a high-power laser — a very high-tech piece of equipment that requires elaborate control and monitoring gear, consumes an enormous amount of power, and requires a large cooling system to keep it at operating temperature. Invented in the mid-Sixties, laser technology is quite young, and while the small lasers that are found in CD players and optical fiber networks have achieved a high degree of reliability, high-power lasers used for very exacting work such as holography do not have the same reliability. The holographer's laser must produce a beam of light of an *exact* frequency at an exact intensity that is perfectly collimated (all light rays being emitted by the laser must be exactly parallel to each other). Because of this collimation, a laser beam can theoretically travel for an almost infinite distance without increasing in diameter or losing intensity. If the laser frequency drifts during exposure, or if there is any variation in intensity or collimation, the hologram is ruined.

Once shot, the H-1 plate is developed. An H-1 glass plate, when seen in normal light, appears to have nothing more than a thin grey film on it. If, however, a laser beam is projected through this glass plate, the glowing image of the original model appears suspended in space several inches in front of the plate, and can be viewed from any angle. The laser-projected H-1 hologram, while not very practical for mass distribution, is holography at its most breathtaking. The image looks solid-until you try to touch it and your fingers pass right through it. Each level of background art appears to be a glowing piece of flat art suspended in mid-air. (If you ever get an opportunity to see an exhibit of H-1 holography, it is definitely worth your time.)

The Cable statue (X-FORCE #25) under the vivid red laser beam at the Poloroid holographic studios.

The Polaroid holographic studio in Cambridge, MA–this table weighs two tons and is suspended on air cushions to protect against the slightest vibrations.

A Polaroid technician checks the frequency of the laser beam to make certain it remains consistent.

The Magneto statue (from Greg Capullo artwork) for UNCANNY X-MEN #304.

Photograph by Stephen F. Hanson

When the H-1 holograms are made from all of the art and the model, these images are projected onto a single photographic plate in a series of exposures that form an H-2 hologram. This is often likened to making a photographic print from a negative, or several negatives in this case. It is the H-2 hologram that forms a multilevel holographic image that is viewable in normal light.

Once the H-2 image is generated and approved by the Marvel editors, plates are made for the production of the H-2 images that will be applied to the comic books. It is in the production of the finished holograms that the Polaroid process is unique. Rather than emboss the hologram pattern (which is really an immensely complex structure of pits and ridges) into an aluminum foil film, the hologram image is transferred to a photographic film. This allows for the sharpest and most vivid image available.

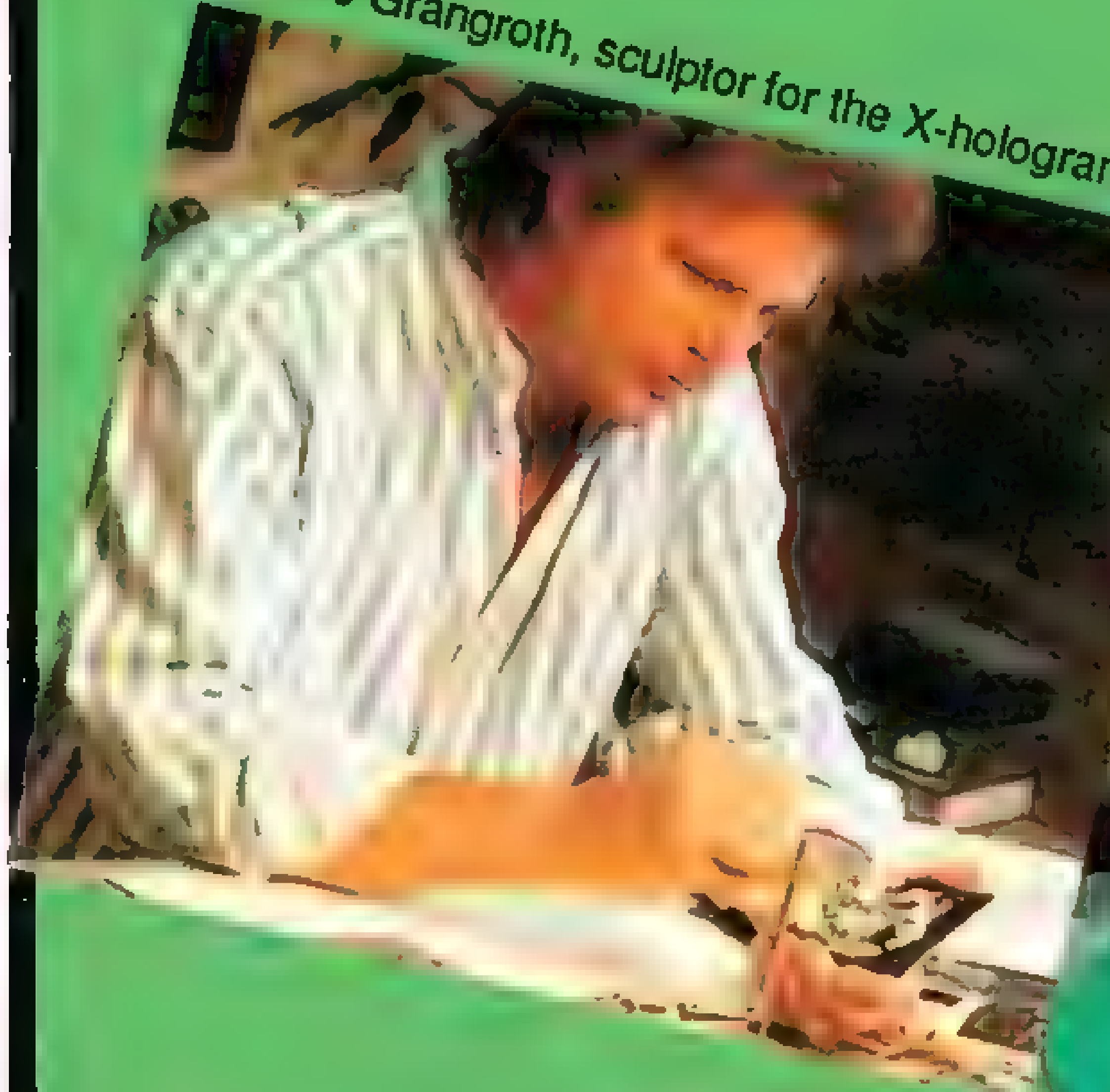
While the holograms are being produced, other work is being done to create the rest of the book. The actual covers are printed at Seiple Litho of Canton, Ohio, on a high-speed mini-web press. This press prints onto a 14-inch roll (or web) of paper, and cuts the web into sheets — two covers to a sheet. Printing covers at a rate of 19,000 sheets per hour, this press is producing more than 10 covers per second. Once the covers are printed, they are shipped to one of Marvel's printers, where the books are manufactured. The text of the book is printed on a much larger full-bed web press standing two-stories high. These presses print on rolls of paper that are up to five feet wide and can weigh 1,400 pounds each. Running flat out, these presses will produce 60,000 folded text sections per hour, just over 16 per second. Then the covers and texts are bound together into books, which are then packed and shipped to stores.

Unlike any other special cover that Marvel has done, the holograms themselves will not be applied until the books are bound. Polaroid holograms must be hand applied because of the thickness of the image, and this adds weeks to the already tight schedule for these books.

These special covers are only one part of the 30th anniversary celebration of the X-Men, as there are many other events scheduled for this summer. However, the holograms will undoubtedly be among the most *memorable* aspects of the X-Men summer of 1993, and who knows how Marvel will top this one!

– *Christopher Ebel*

Model making & the Modelmaker

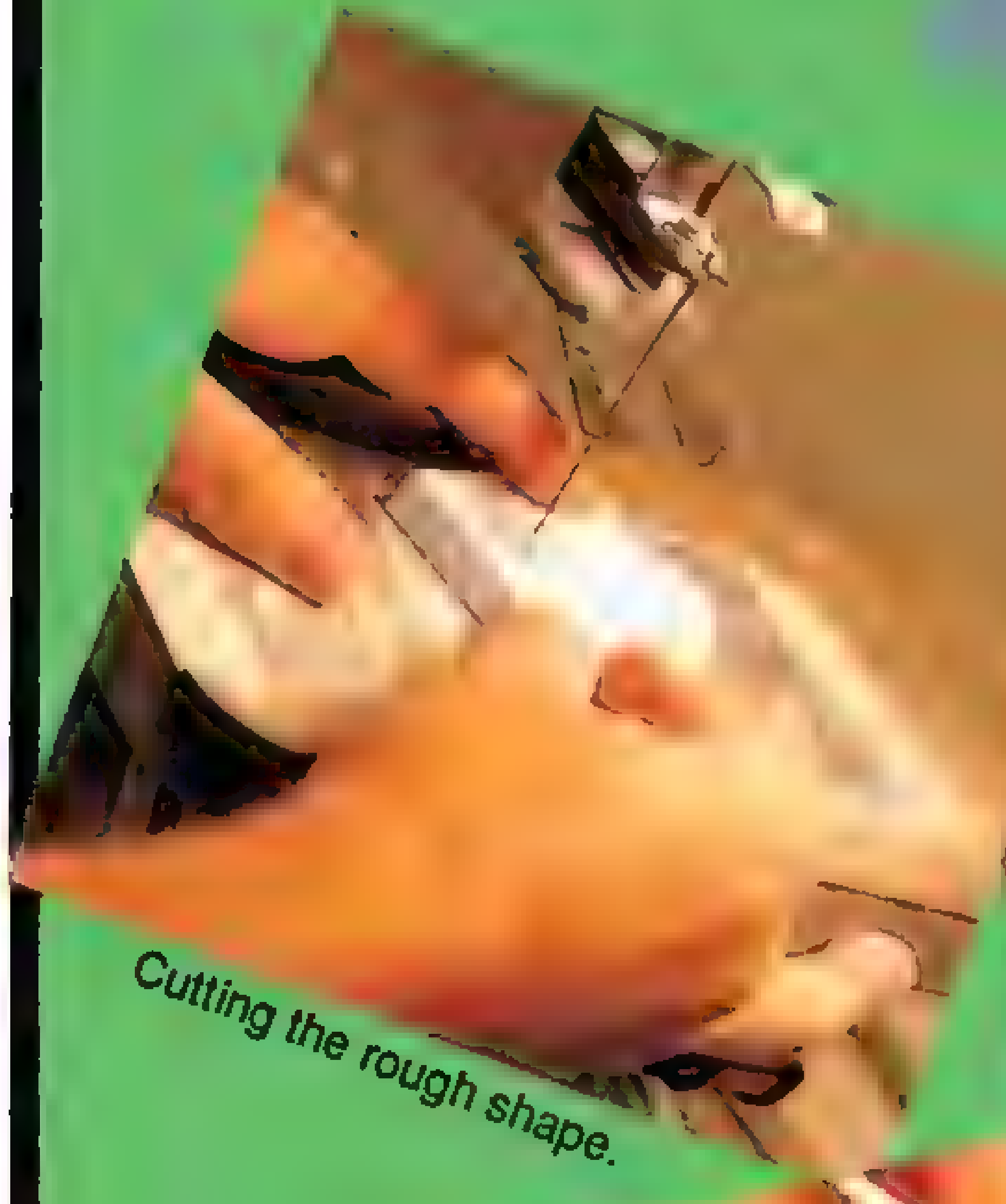


Dario Grangroth, sculptor for the X-holograms.

Mixing the Hydrocal plaster.

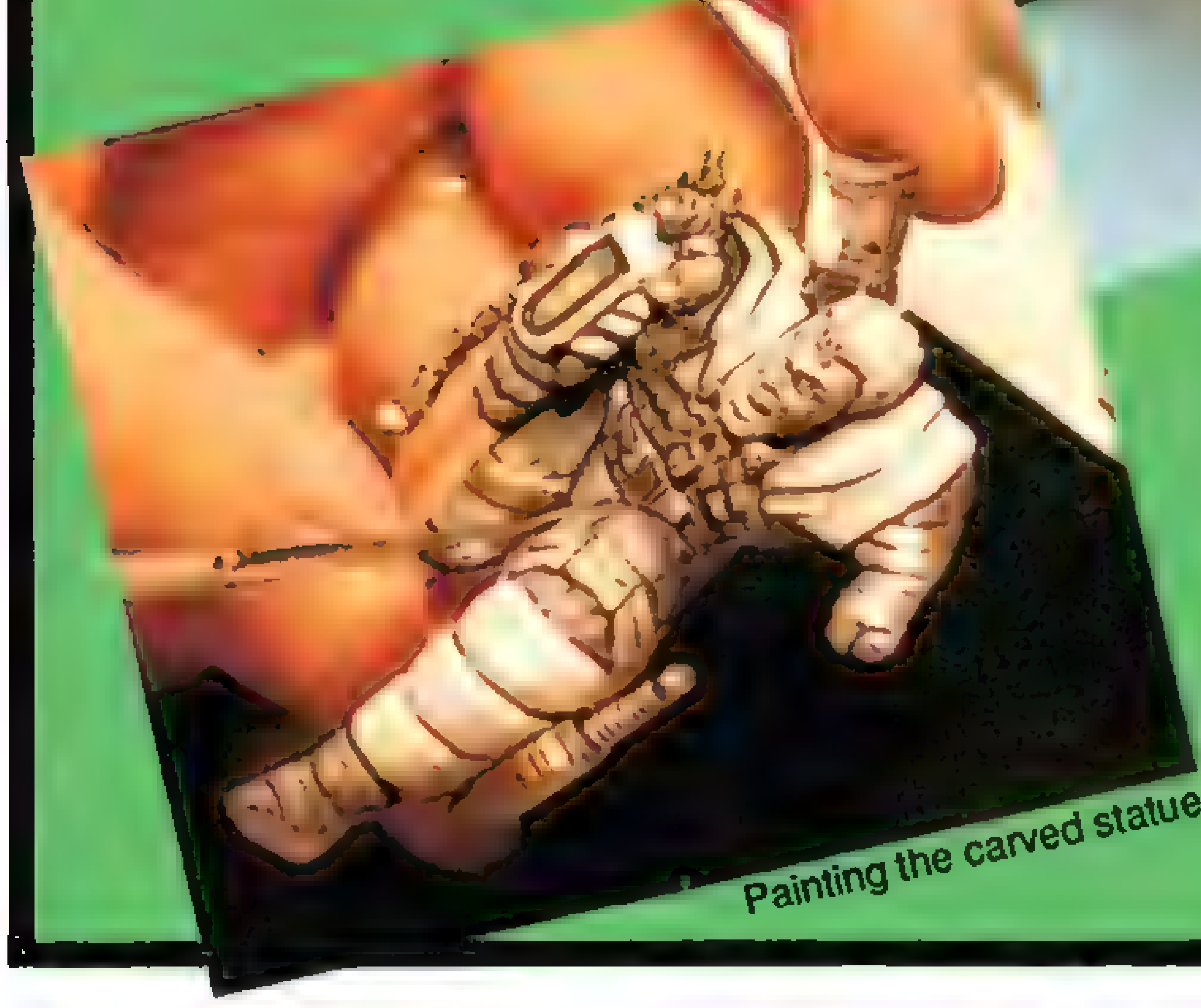
Pouring the flat plaster slab.

Transferring the outline.



Cutting the rough shape.

Shaping the model.



Painting the carved statue.

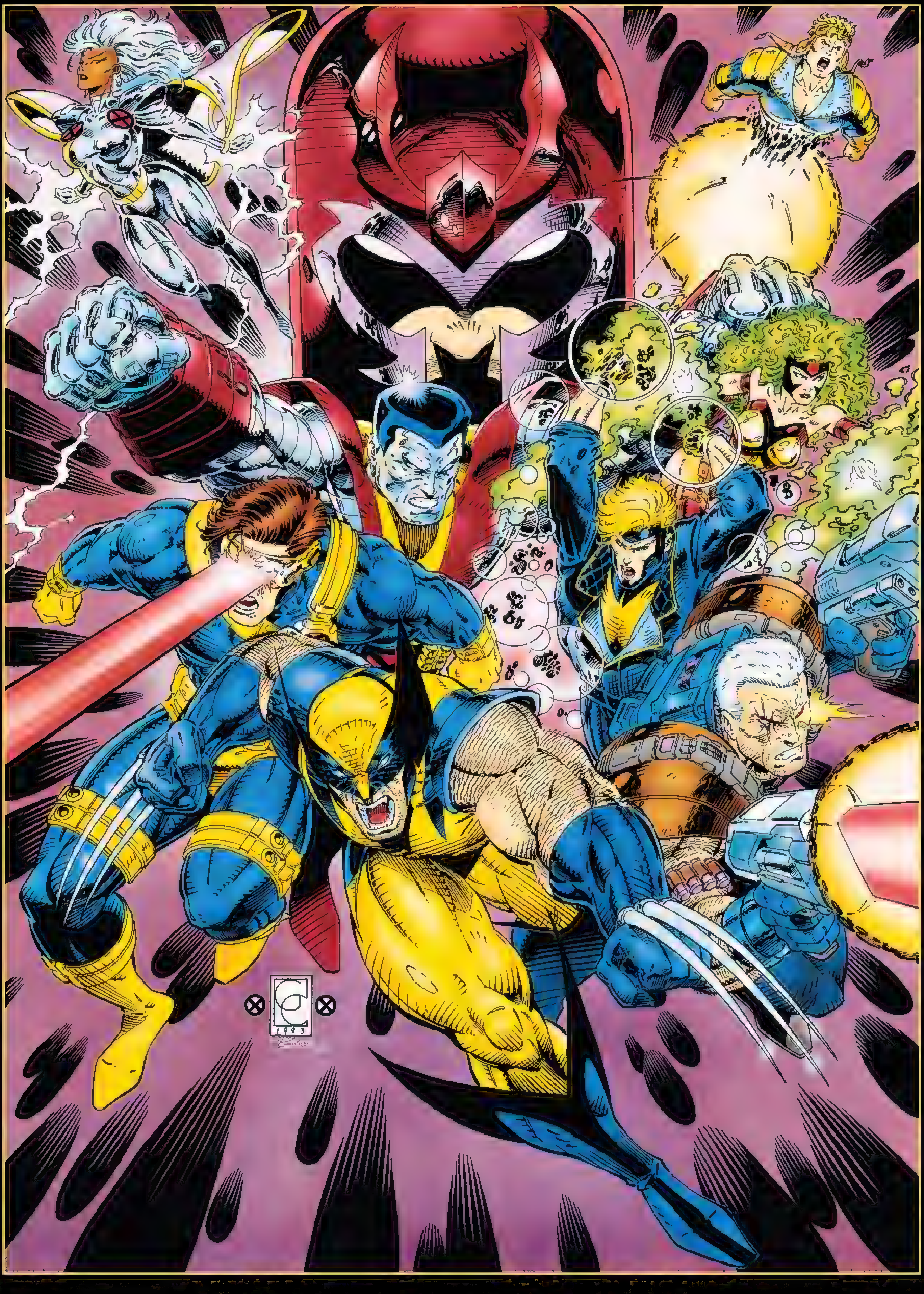
Currently based in Salt Lake City, UT, Dario Grangroth was born and raised in Minneapolis, MN. He started doing sculpture in high school, and knew then that it was his calling. He then attended Minneapolis College of Art & Design and graduated in 1970 with a fine arts degree in sculpture, then moved to Salt Lake City in 1979. Dario usually goes by his first name only, and has been working with Polaroid regularly for several years. He has been a commercial sculptor for almost 25 years and has been creating models for holography for the last five. His previous clients include Tonka, General Mills, Disney, and Hanna-Barbera, for which he has created prototypes of action figures and other toys.

Dario is finding his work for Marvel to be challenging and enjoyable because of the exciting nature of the artwork and the fact that there "are no straight lines" to these models, he noted. What Dario likes most about his work is the flexibility he has in setting his own hours, the professionalism that he runs into in his field, and the opportunity that he has to use his talents every day. His least favorite aspects are the intense pressure to get jobs done on tight deadlines, and the fact that not all of the jobs that he takes are as visually stimulating as the X-Men hologram models.

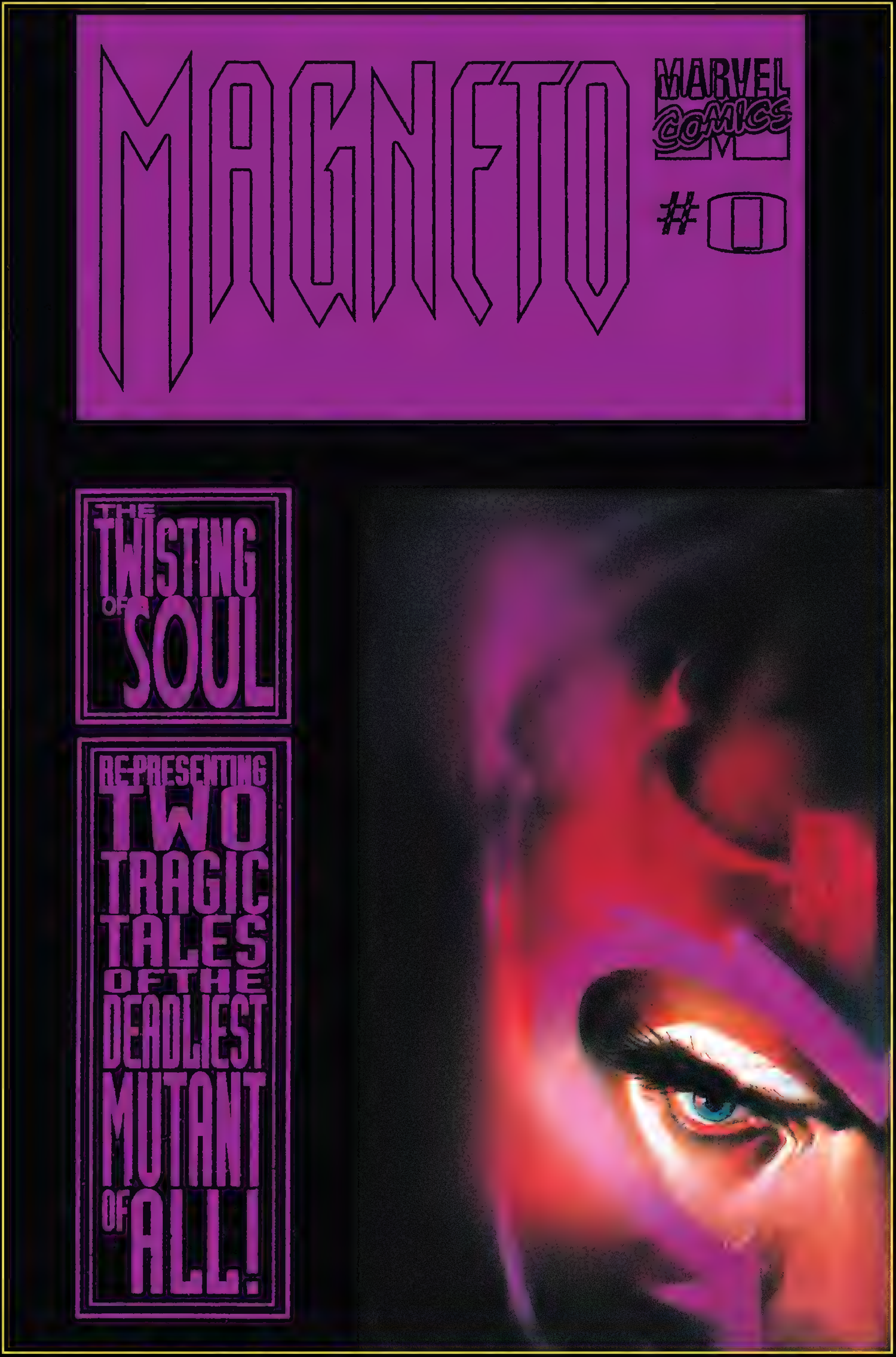
It takes Dario three to five full days to create something like the Havok model that appeared on the cover of X-FACTOR #92. The first thing he does is to mix up a batch of Hydrocal (a hard plaster) and pour it into a mold to form a flat slab. After this has thoroughly set, he transfers the outlines from the flat art (at final size) to the face of the slab and uses a jigsaw to cut the rough shape of the model out of the slab. Then the time-consuming process of carving the details into the model can begin. He frequently refers back to the original art as the model slowly emerges. Once all of the shaping is done, several coats of sealer are applied until the plaster is smooth. Once the surface of the plaster has been finished, the details are painted on in muted shades of grey using *very* fine brushes, as no color can be used or is visible in the final hologram. The finished model is then attached to its background and is ready to be sent to Marvel for editorial approval.

—Christopher Ebel

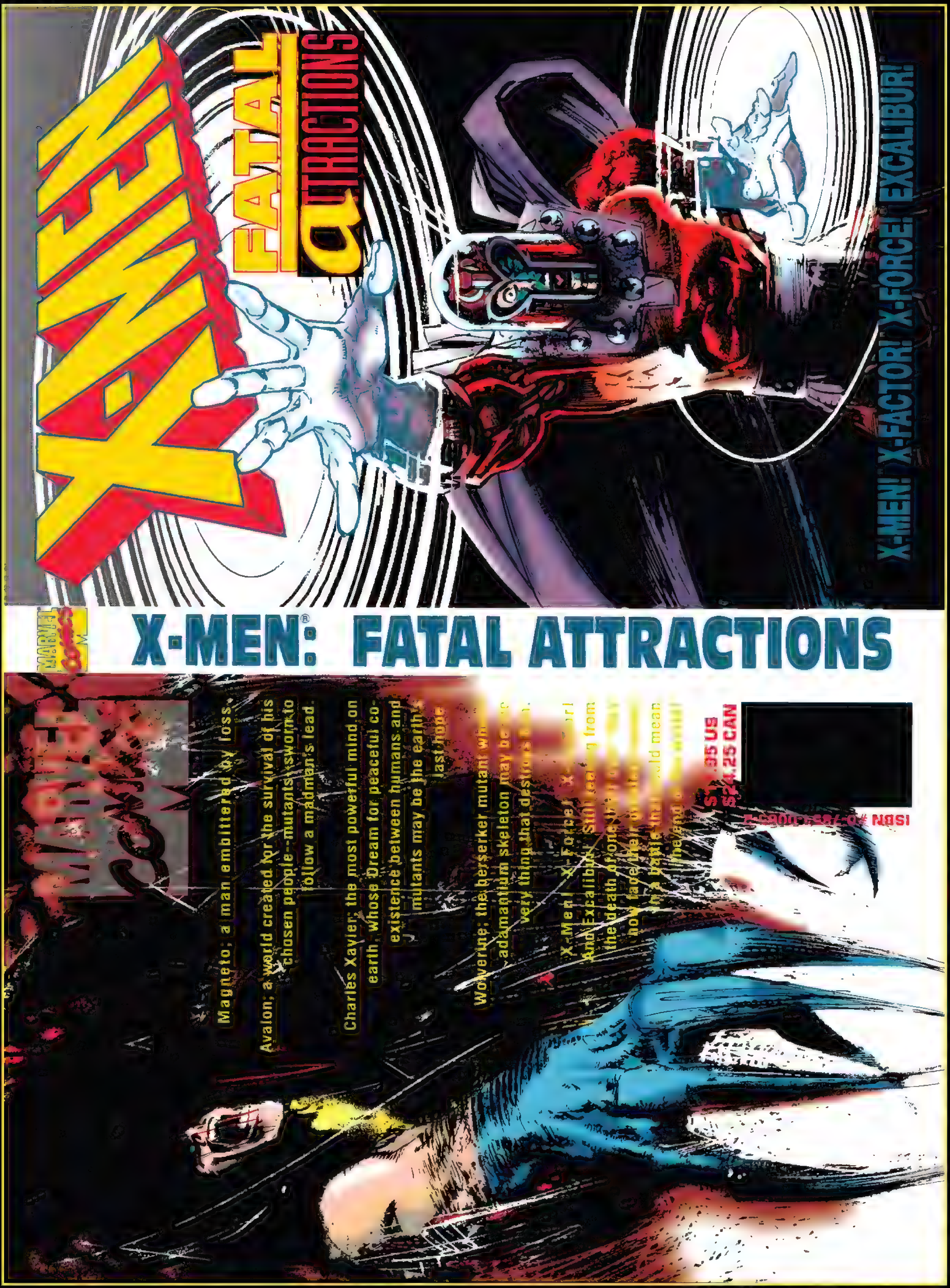
Photographs by Charmaine Grangroth



X-MEN 30TH ANNIVERSARY POSTER BY GREG CAPULLO & TOM SMITH


MAGNETO
MARVEL COMICS
#0
THE TWISTING OF SOUL
RE-PRESENTING TWO TRAGIC TALES OF THE DEADLIEST MUTANT OF ALL!

THE PROMOTIONAL ONE-SHOT *MAGNETO #0* REPRINTED MAGNETO STORIES FROM *CLASSIC X-MEN* #12 AND #19, AND AN EXCERPT FROM *X-MEN UNLIMITED* #2. COVER BY BILL SIENKIEWICZ


X-MEN
FATAL ATTRACTIONS
X-MEN! X-FACTOR! X-FORCE! EXCALIBUR!
MARVEL COMICS
X-MEN®: FATAL ATTRACTIONS
Magneto: a man embittered by loss.
Avalon: a world created for the survival of his chosen people--mutants sworn to follow a madman's lead.
Charles Xavier: the most powerful mind on earth, whose Dream for peaceful co-existence between humans and mutants may be the earth's last hope.
Wolverine: the berserker mutant wh
adamantium skeleton may be
very thing that destr
X-Men! X-Force! X-
And Excalibur! Still reeling from
the death of one
now face their
in a battle that
ld mean
the end
$24.25 CAN
ISBN #0-7851-

X-MEN: FATAL ATTRACTIONS TPB (1994 1ST EDITION) FRONT & BACK COVER BY BILL SIENKIEWICZ

X-MEN: FATAL ATTRACTIONS TPB INTRODUCTION BY SCOTT LOBDELL

What's that old saying about "always expect the unexpected"?

As a kid, I regarded it as one of the Great Paradoxes…ranking right up there with, "If you don't know how to spell the word, look it up in the dictionary." If you expect something, how could it possibly be unexpected? It was about this time I was going to stuff all my worldly belongings into my otherwise empty gym bag and head for the wisdom-infested mountains of Tibet, when suddenly…I discovered the "All New, All Different X-Men" (circa 1975).

And at that moment, all was made clear.

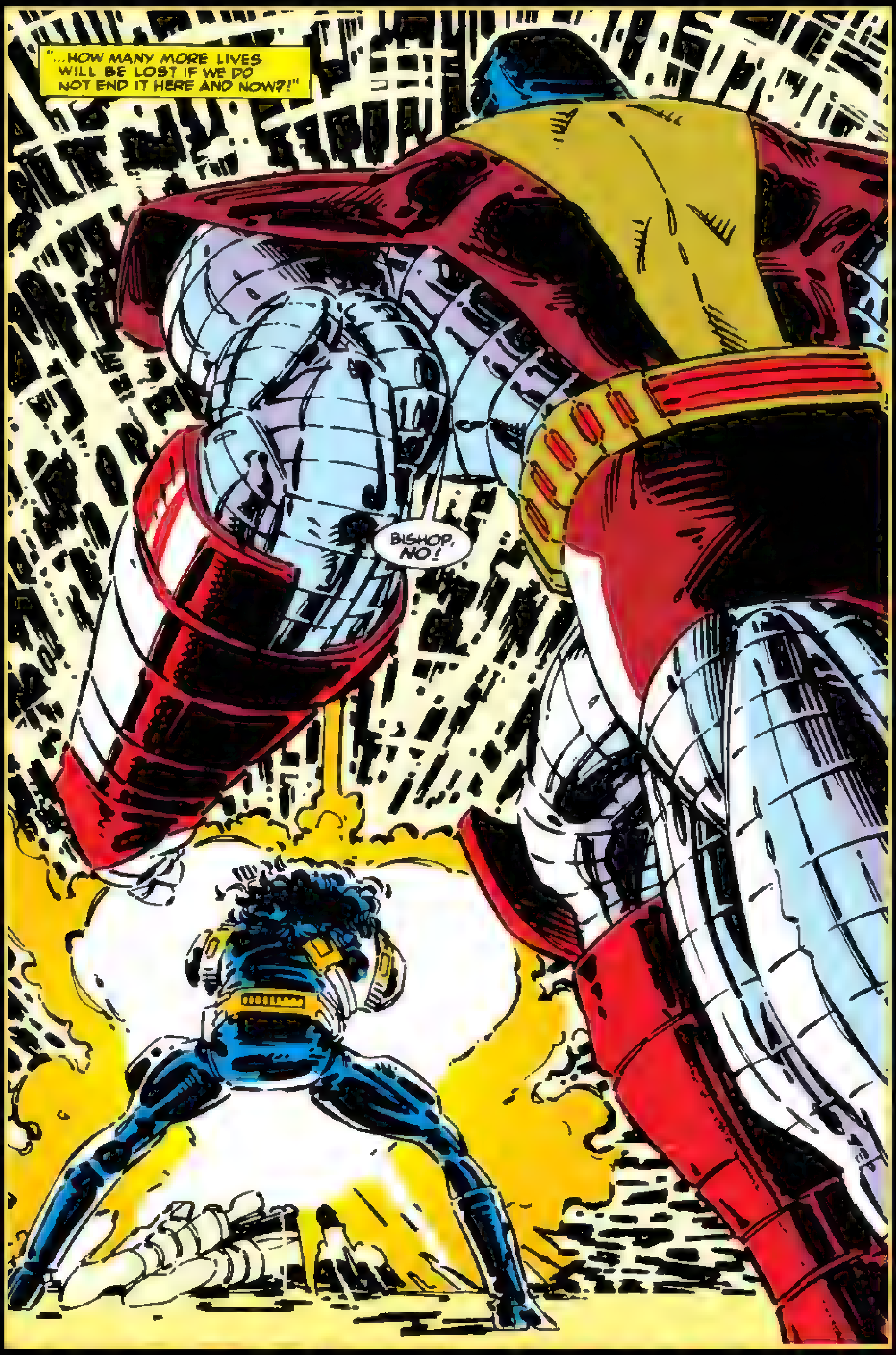
See, for as long as they've been around, everyone's favorite misunderstood mutants have been delivering the unexpected. Whether it was the first "death" of Professor X (courtesy of the Changeling), the subsequent dissolution of the X-Men, the rise and fall of the Phoenix or the unannounced flash-forward into the "Days of Future Past," one of the canons of X-Men law is…you never know what's going to happen from one issue to the next—sometimes, from one panel to the next.

The "Fatal Attractions" story you are about to read may be the most dramatic example of all. Colossus' sister Illyana has passed away as a victim of Stryfe's Legacy Virus. Magneto's sect of mutant Acolytes, who have been missing, gather together to stage a big ol' welcome-home party. Senator Kelly has been publicly debating the merits of Project Wideawake, when all of a sudden…whoooops.

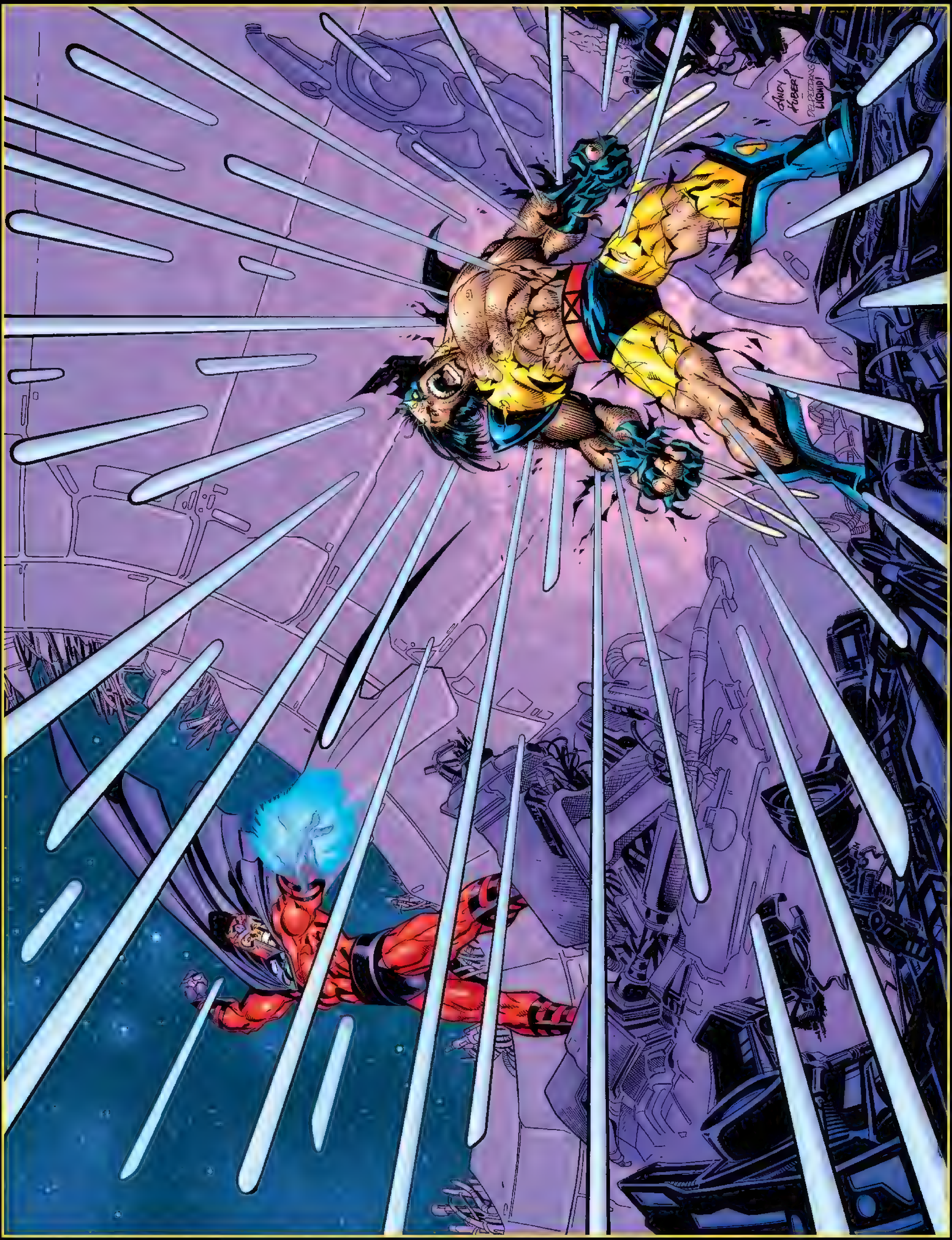
I guess if I tell you, you'll expect it.

Enjoy!

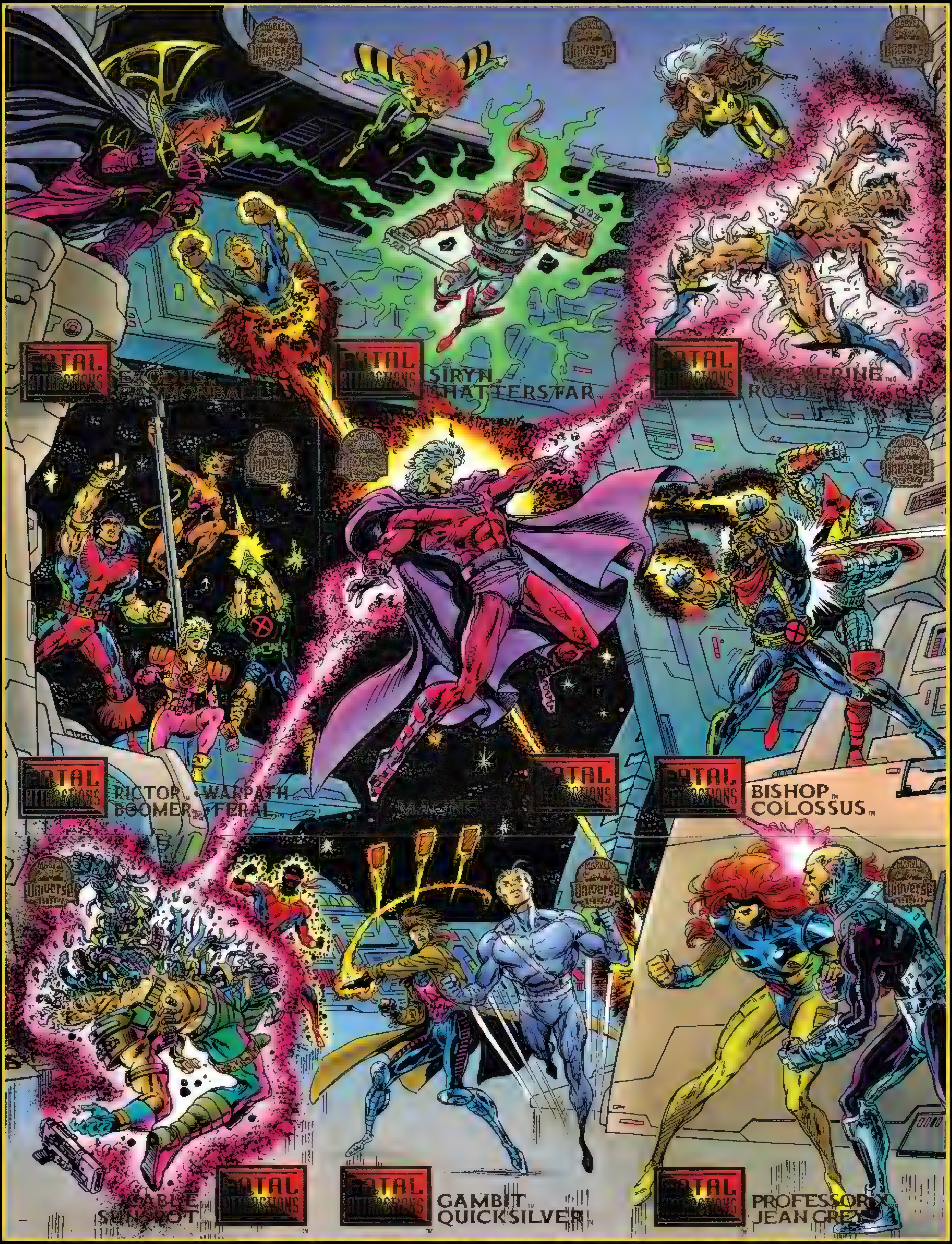
SCOTT LOBDELL


"…HOW MANY MORE LIVES WILL BE LOST IF WE DO NOT END IT HERE AND NOW?!"
BISHOP, NO!

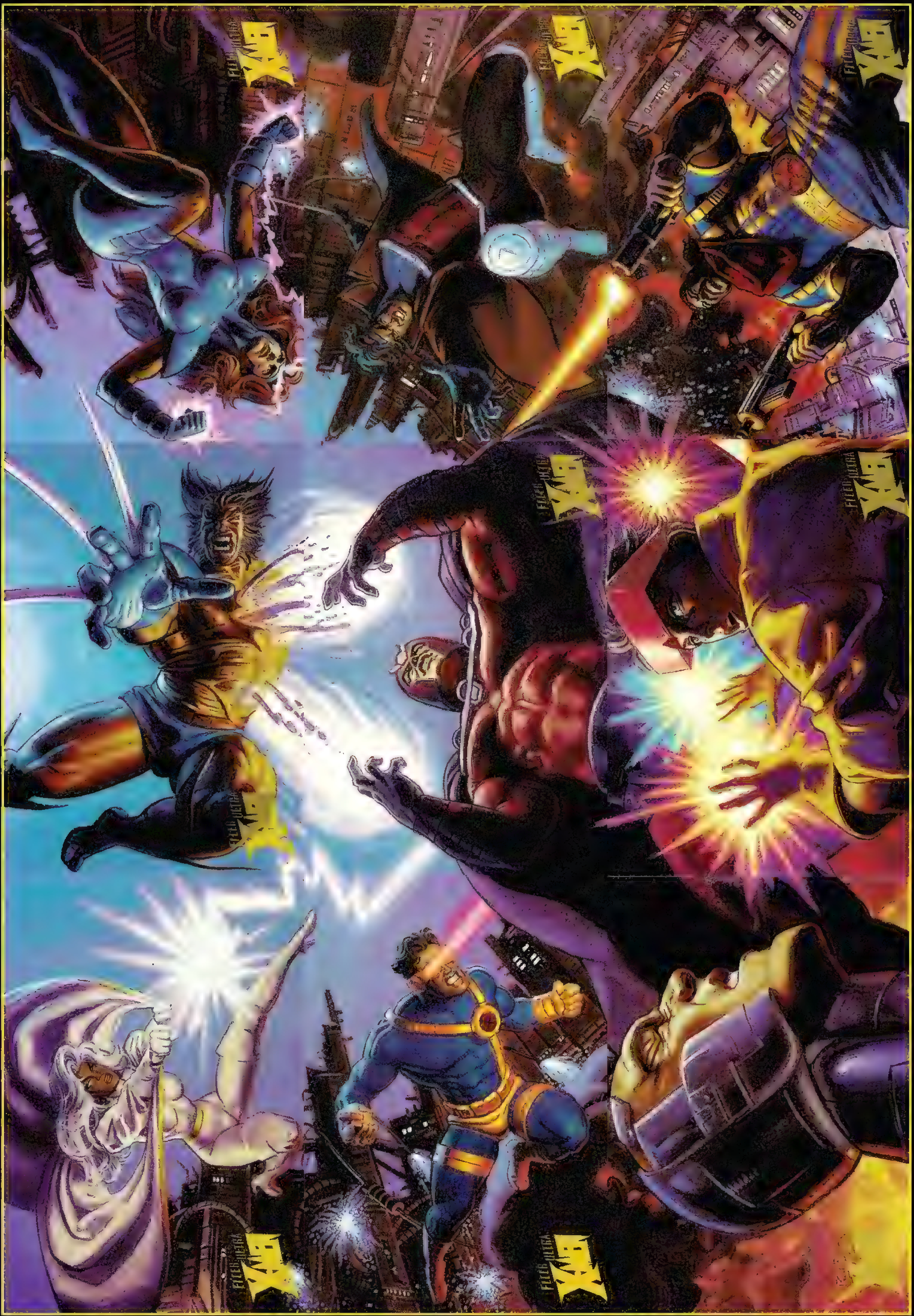
THE 1994 *X-MEN: FATAL ATTRACTIONS TPB* CREATED A NEW STORY PAGE TO BALANCE DOUBLE-PAGE SPREADS IN *UNCANNY X-MEN #304*. REUSING ART BY JOHN ROMITA JR., THIS PAGE WAS PLACED BETWEEN *UNCANNY X-MEN #304* PAGES 44-45 (PAGES 147-148 IN THIS TPB).


ANDY KUBERT
DELPERDANG
LIQUID!

MARVEL COLLECTIBLE CLASSICS: X-MEN #4 REPRINTED *X-MEN #25*. COVER BY ADAM KUBERT, JESSE DELPERDANG & LIQUID!

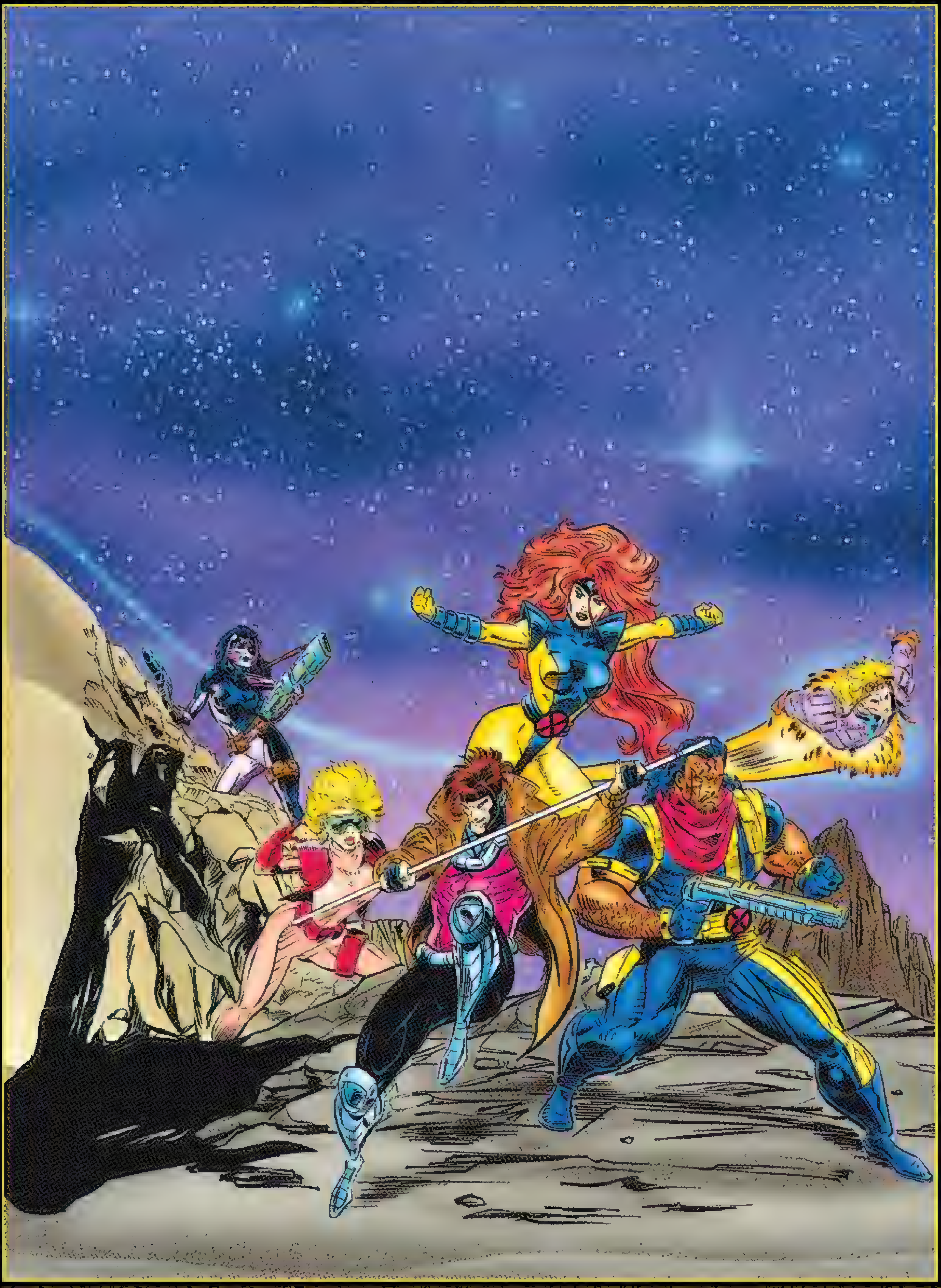

MARVEL UNIVERSE 1994
FATAL ATTRACTIONS
EXODUS CANNONBALL
SIRYN SHATTERSTAR
WOLVERINE ROGUE
RICTOR WARPATH BOOMER FERAL
MAGNETO
BISHOP COLOSSUS
CABLE SUNSPOT
GAMBIT QUICKSILVER
PROFESSOR X JEAN GREY

MARVEL UNIVERSE 1994 "FATAL ATTRACTIONS" TRADING CARDS BY KERRY GAMMILL, GREG ADAMS & PAUL MOUNTS

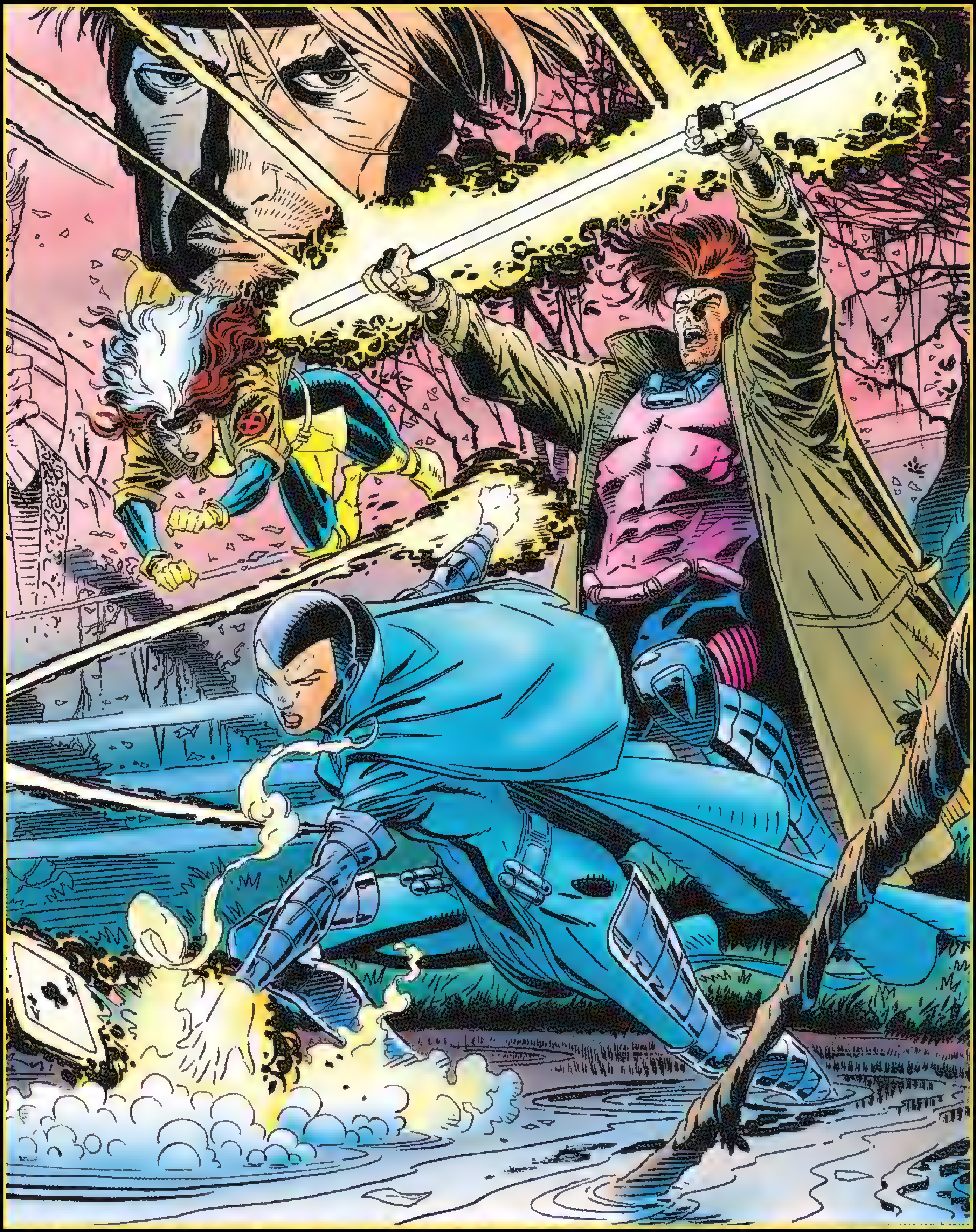


FLEER ULTRA X-MEN '96 "FATAL ATTRACTIONS" TRADING CARDS BY GREG & TIM HILDEBRANDT

GAMBIT #1 WAS ALSO PUBLISHED AS A DELUXE GOLD EDITION, WHICH CONTAINED SEVERAL BONUS PINUPS.



PINUP BY GREG CAPULLO & BUD LaROSA



PINUP BY LEE WEEKS

PINUP BY LEE WEEKS

GAMBIT™
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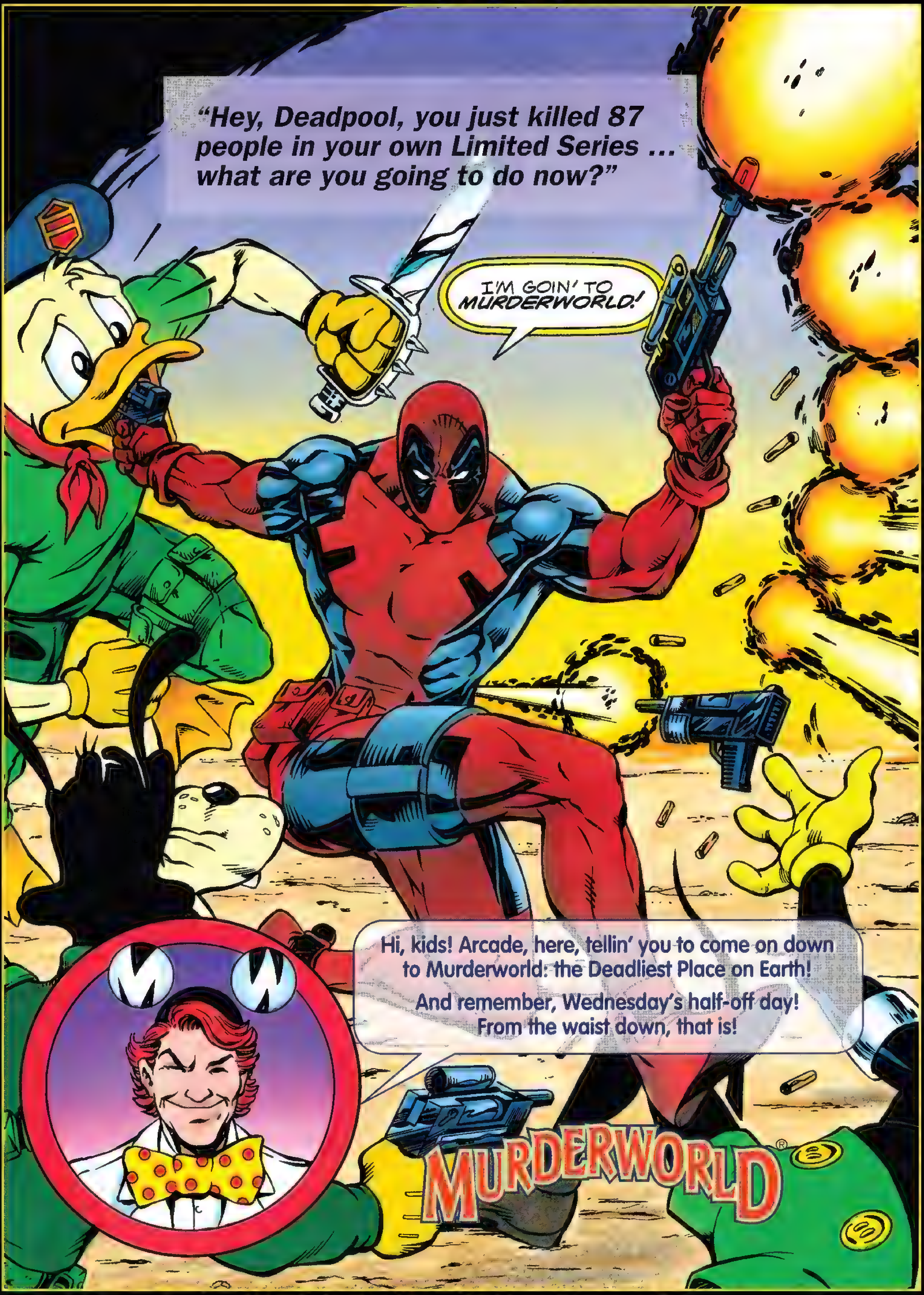
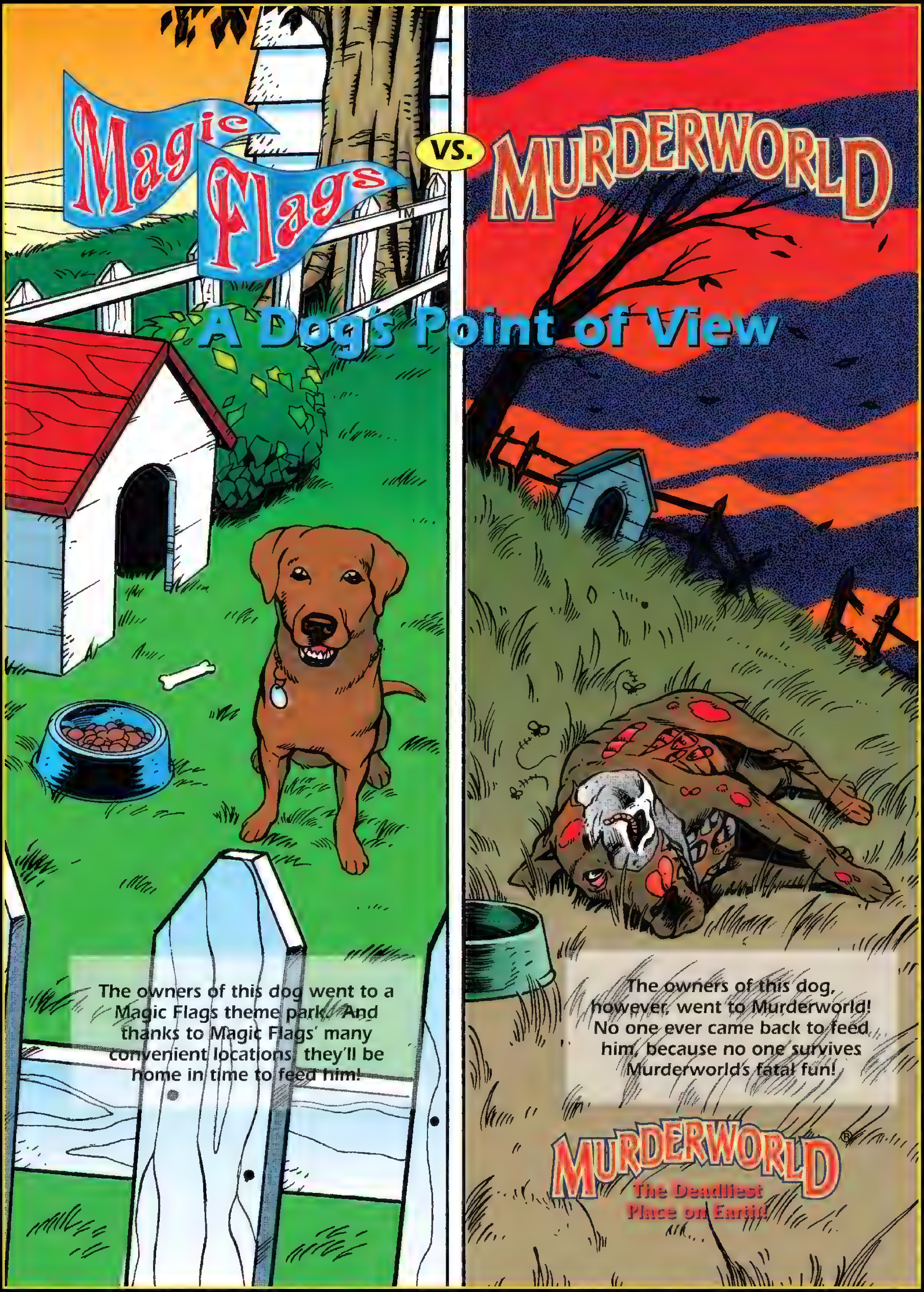
Mackie
LEE
Weeks
KLAUS
Janson
LEE WEEKS

GAMBIT TPB COVER BY LEE WEEKS

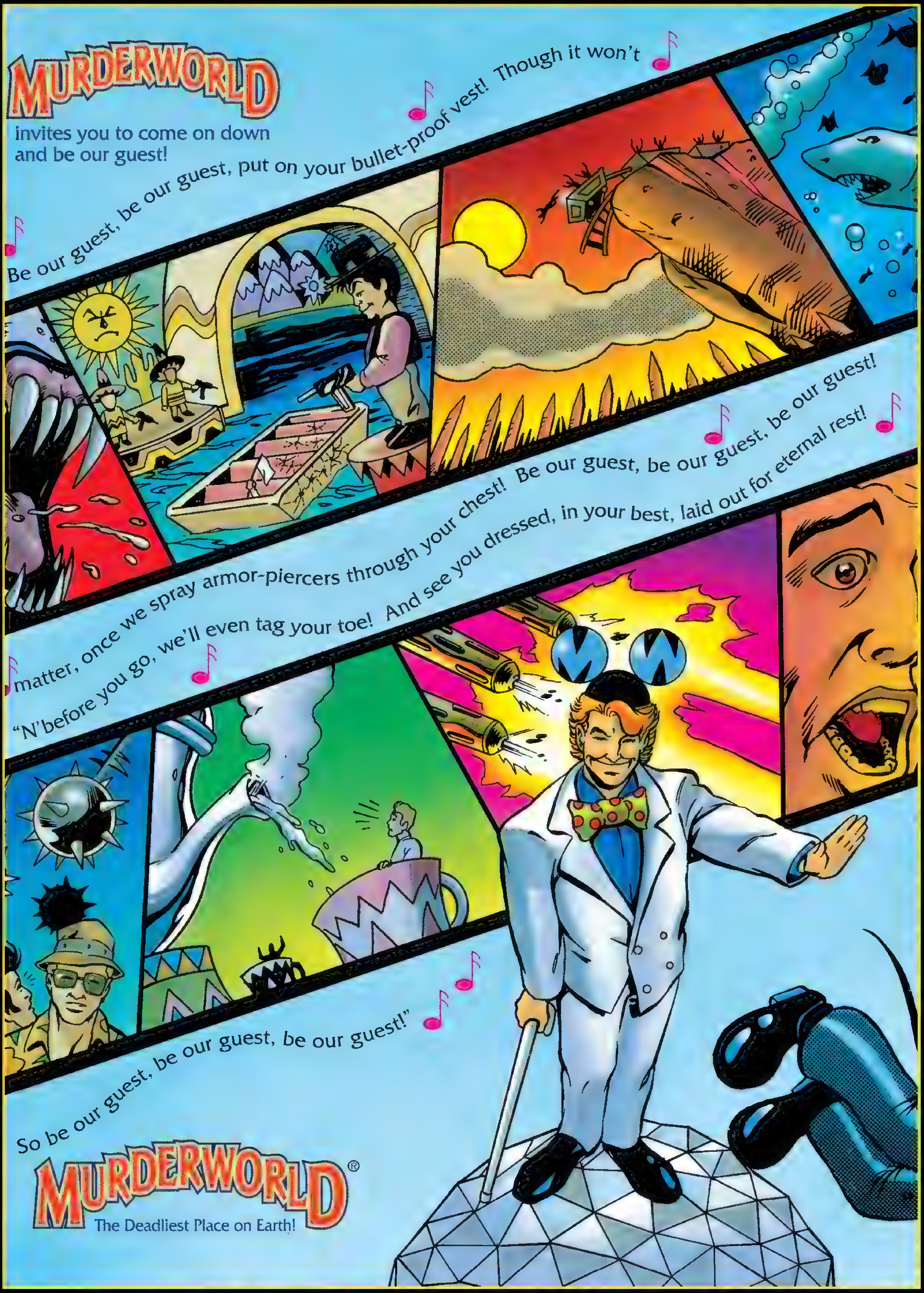
MARVEL YEAR-IN-REVIEW '93 "MURDERWORLD" PARODY ADS BY
DAN SLOTT, MANNY GALÀN, SCOTT KOBLISH, GREGORY WRIGHT & PAUL MOUNTS

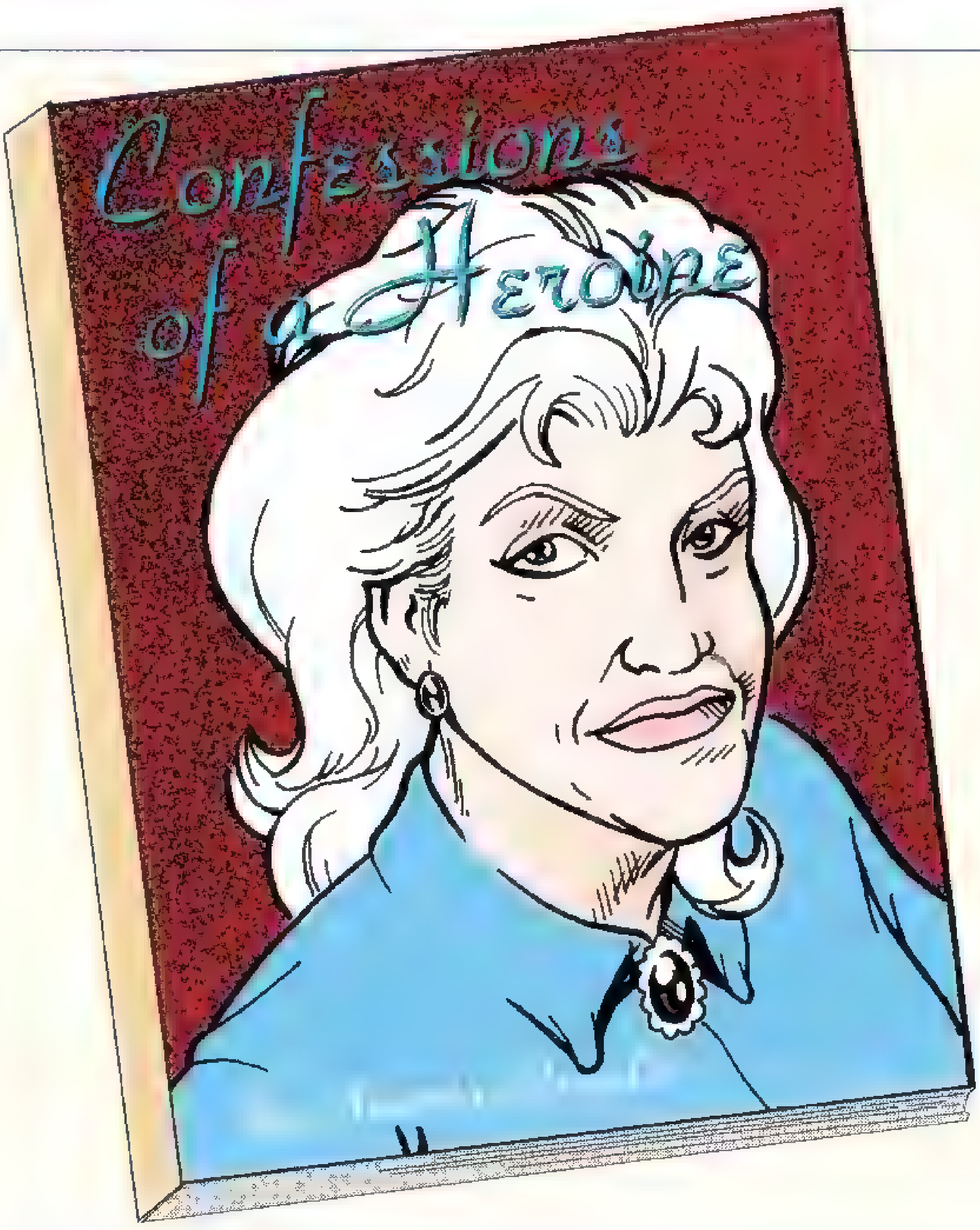

"Hey, Deadpool, you just killed 87 people in your own Limited Series ... what are you going to do now?"
I'M GOIN' TO MURDERWORLD!
Hi, kids! Arcade, here, tellin' you to come on down to Murderworld: the Deadliest Place on Earth!
And remember, Wednesday's half-off day! From the waist down, that is!
MURDERWORLD®


Magic Flags™
VS.
MURDERWORLD
A Dog's Point of View
MURDERWORLD®
The Deadliest Place on Earth!

The owners of this dog went to a Magic Flags theme park. And thanks to Magic Flags' many convenient locations, they'll be home in time to feed him!

The owners of this dog, however, went to Murderworld! No one ever came back to feed him, because no one survives Murderworld's fatal fun!


MURDERWORLD
invites you to come on down and be our guest!
Be our guest, be our guest, put on your bullet-proof vest! Though it won't matter, once we spray armor-piercers through your chest! Be our guest, be our guest, be our guest!
"N'before you go, we'll even tag your toe! And see you dressed, in your best, laid out for eternal rest!
So be our guest, be our guest, be our guest!"
MURDERWORLD®
The Deadliest Place on Earth!



Almost Super

Former super hero Amanda "Barbe-Cutie: Mistress of the Grill" Reynolds is the latest celebrity also-ran to publish a tell-all tome revealing what it was like to be a member of the Spandex Set. Her scathing behind-the-scenes book has rocketed to the top of the bestseller lists, as she claims to having actually been a founding member of not one but two groups of super heroes: the Avengers and the X-Men.

Although her association with Earth's Mightiest Heroes has now been confirmed by Iron Man and Ant-Man, no mutant has admitted to knowing anything about Barbe-Cutie or her startling claims. Is it all a bunch of hooey, or was Barbe-Cutie really there when the X-Men were first formed? You decide, as we excerpt the beginning of chapter 10 from her book, *Confessions of a Heroine.*

Chapter 10

"X-*This!*"

Just when I thought things couldn't get any worse, along came Charles "If It Moves and Its Parents Have Money It Must Be a Mutant" Xavier. He convinced me that he had a new angle on this whole super hero business, and I had just what he needed for his new group. Little did I realize at the time that it wasn't my crime-fighting abilities he was interested in.

Next thing I knew, I was at his mansion; specifically, in the kitchen. You see, Xavier needed a cook.

Of course, an ordinary cook just wouldn't do for his new mutants ... no, it had to be a *super powered mutant* cook. I tried to explain that I wasn't a mutant, that it was an accident with radioactive barbecue tongs which had granted me my control over grilled meats. But he told me to just fake it; you know, get beaten up by ignorant, prejudiced humans once in a while just because I'm different, that sort of thing.

Well, I needed the money. I took the job.

The first order of business was giving me a mutant name. I guess "Barbe-Cutie" just doesn't cut it with those X-types. We went through quite a few options — "Meat Mistress", "Chef Girlardee", "Salad Shooter", "Forque", "Cuisine Queen", "Tableclaws" and others — but finally I settled for "X-Shell".

Next came my costume. Most cooks wear white, but I had to put on one of those funky yellow-and-black deals the rest of 'em have. I felt like a huge, stupid bumblebee, but at least mustard stains weren't much of a problem anymore.

Let me tell you, though: you haven't cooked until you've cooked for the Uncanny X-Men. Bunch of spoiled, whiny brats with eating disorders. The Beast — you think he got that name because he's got fur? Try again, and this time think *table manners.*

Marvel Girl was just the opposite — she hardly ate at all, and when she did eat, she liked to float her food from plate to mouth. Her plates generally didn't need washing when she was done, I'll give the anorexic little witch *that.*

Then there was Iceman. He wanted everything cold, *really* cold, and demanded that someone always say, "Bobby, hurry up, your dinner's getting warm!" He thought it was really funny. Yeah, ha-freakin'-*ha.* Then, of course, the food was never cold enough for him — we're talking rock-solid frozen pork chops and the like — so he'd show off by making it even colder. I'll never forget the time I gave him liquid nitrogen instead of his usual frozen soda ... *that* shut him up for a few weeks!

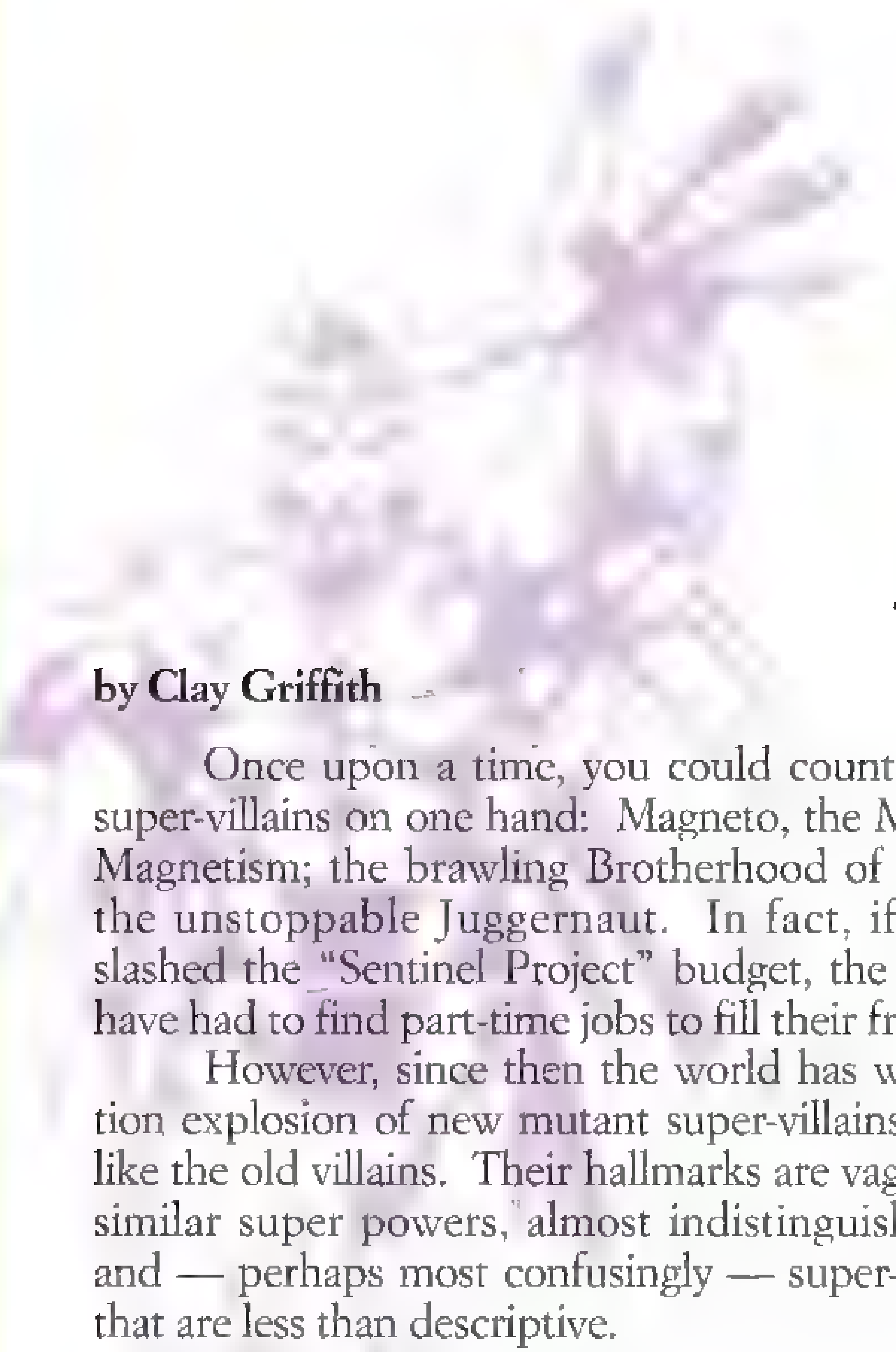
Then there was the Angel's obsession with spaghetti, hot dogs, linguini, link sausages, fettucine, and angel hair pasta. And I *never did* get him to admit it had anything to do with worms.

And the worst was the Professor himself. Eggs, eggs and more eggs ... and always hard-boiled! It was disgusting! I shudder to think of the cholesterol count that man must have today. I don't care if he said it was "brain food", if he'd thought about it for half a minute he would've remembered his brain needs a functioning *heart* to stay alive!

Things were tolerable as long as the X-Men weren't fighting super-villains, but unfortunately they pretty much always were. When they battled Magneto, I got to watch my cutlery fly around the kitchen. When they were giving the Vanisher trouble, he'd give *me* trouble; popping up in front of the stove, dumping the wrong seasonings into my stew, and then vanishing. And, worst of all, there was the time the Blob wandered into my kitchen ... in fact, that was the day I quit.

MARVEL YEAR-IN-REVIEW '93 ARTICLE BY ROBERT J. SODARO & JOHN WILCOX

MARVEL YEAR-IN-REVIEW '93 ARTICLE BY CLAY GRIFFITH



KNOW YOUR X-VILLAINS

A Handy Guide to Life in the Mutant '90s

by Clay Griffith

Once upon a time, you could count the major mutant super-villains on one hand: Magneto, the Messianic Master of Magnetism; the brawling Brotherhood of Evil Mutants; and the unstoppable Juggernaut. In fact, if Washington had slashed the "Sentinel Project" budget, the old X-Men would have had to find part-time jobs to fill their free time.

However, since then the world has witnessed a population explosion of new mutant super-villains. And they're not like the old villains. Their hallmarks are vague and deceptively similar super powers, almost indistinguishable motivations, and — perhaps most confusingly — super-villain code names that are less than descriptive.

Long gone are the days when you could figure a super-villain out just by knowing his name. Magneto ... Blob ... Toad ... Juggernaut. It was simple.

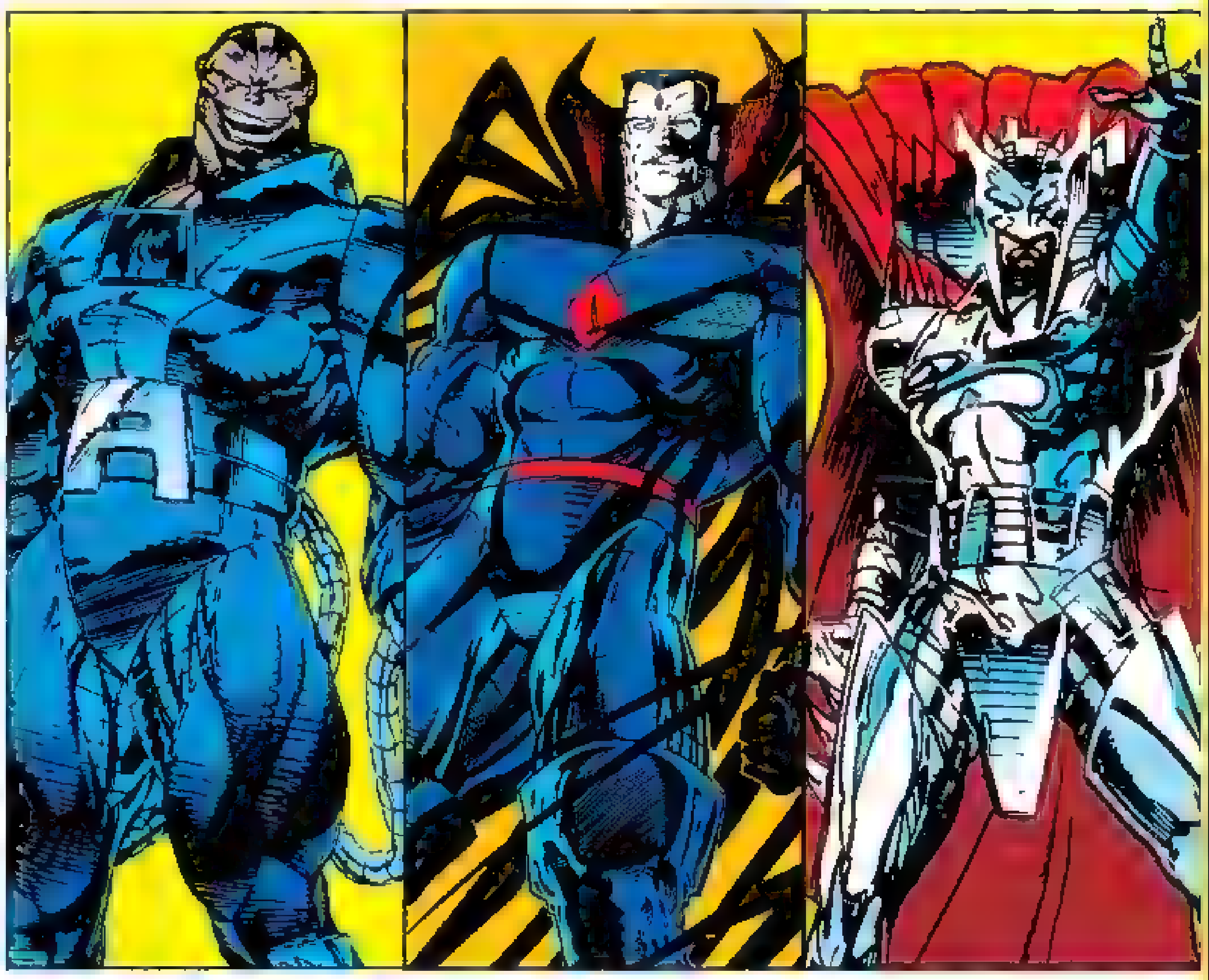
But ... *Fabian Cortez?* Wasn't he a singer in the '50s? Sir Trevor Fitzroy? Does he have fox-hunting powers, does he give people gout, *what?* And who are all these Japanese guys? How can an average, non-mutant citizen tell these new villains apart?

To help, we have created this handy, compact guide to identifying — and, more importantly, *distinguishing between* — the modern mutant super-villains. At a glance, you'll know who's from the future and who's immortal; who wants to conquer the world and who just wants to kill somebody. It's an indispensable aid for survival in a world where mutant super-villains are around every corner looking for a few *homo sapien* bystanders to senselessly slaughter.

THE BIG THREE

Apocalypse, Mr Sinister and Stryfe are the big boys of the new mutant super-villains, skulking behind the scenes, plotting and planning. They don't like to get their hands dirty, so consequently they've driven up the cost of super-powered criminal cannon fodder. Thanks to these guys, an average villain just can't afford Marauders or Dark Riders or Mutant Liberation Fronts anymore.

APOCALYPSE	MR. SINISTER	STRYFE
• Wears blue	• Wears blue	• Doesn't wear blue
• From the past	• From the present	• From the future
• Immortal and pretty smug about it	• Immortal (probably)	• Probably immortal, too (hey,who isn't?)
• Malleable body	• Malleable body and cool red spot on forehead	• Non malleable body
• Fixated on Archangel	• Fixated on Cyclops	• Fixated on Cyclops
• Wants to kill genetic weaklings	• Wants to kill genetic weaklings	• Wants his Mommy and Daddy
• Wants to rule world	• Wants to rule world	• Wants to rule world (or kill it)
• Hires expendable super-lackeys to do dirty work	• Hires expendable super lackeys to do dirty work	• Hires expendable super-lackeys to do dirty work
• Not dead	• Was dead, now not	• Dead (yeah, right)
• Does not look like Cable	• Does not look like Cable	• Looks like Cable
Comments: Thinks too big; needs to select more immediate goals and strive toward them	**Comments:** Has no life Really ought to get one.	**Comments:** Needs counselling. Maybe a twelve-step program like Adult Children of the Atom



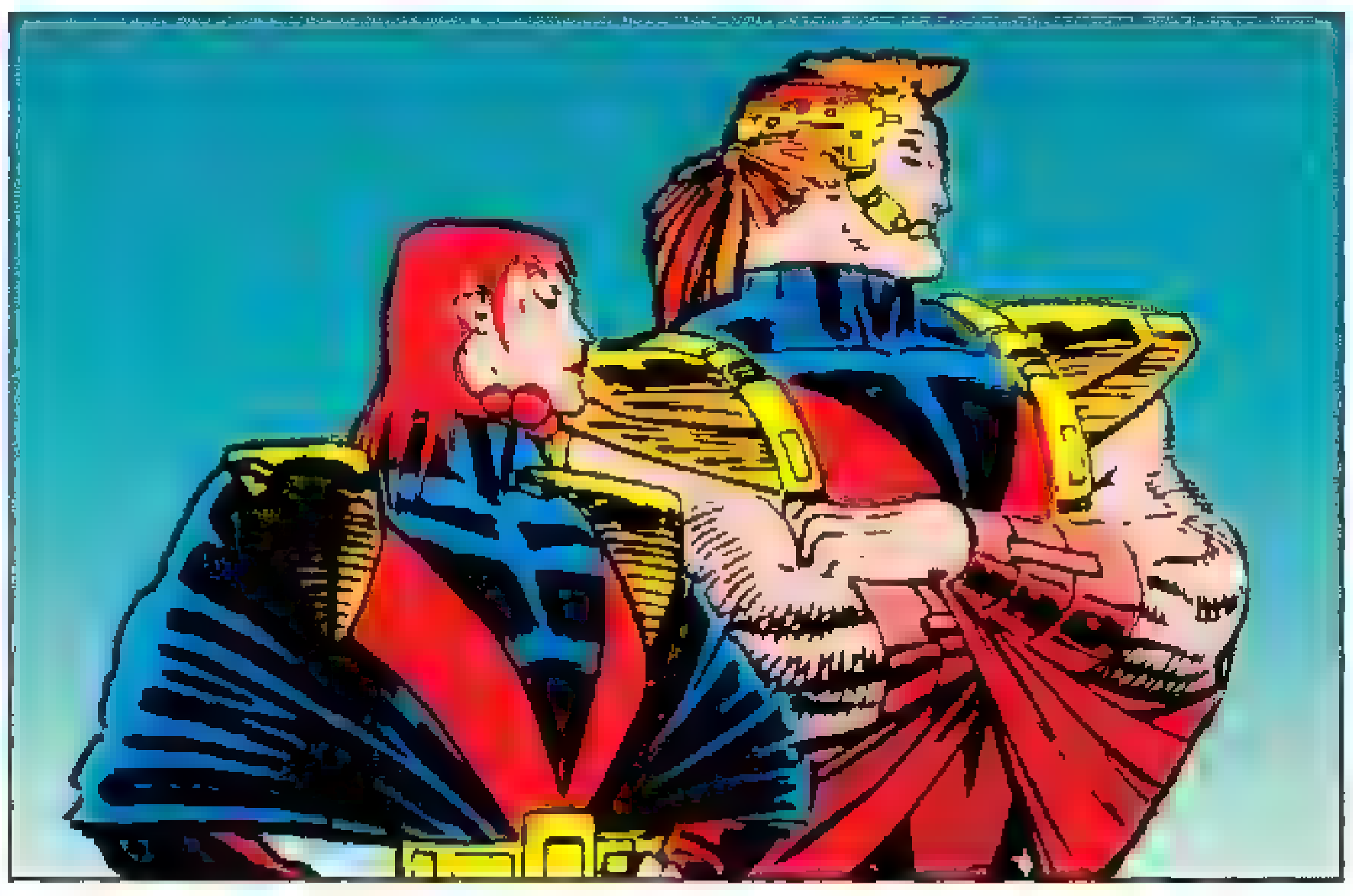
THE MAGNETIC CHOIR

These villains are each so boring and mundane they can't make it as individuals. They formed a club to become a big, tedious, faceless, homogeneous mob dedicated to a super villain who *does* stand out in a crowd — Magneto.

ACOLYTES

Don't bother trying to tell them apart — just run for it. No chart will help you with these guys; they all wear the same costume and call each other by their real names. Those who do have "secret identities" use foreign sounding names that you'll never remember. They all look human except for one alien type

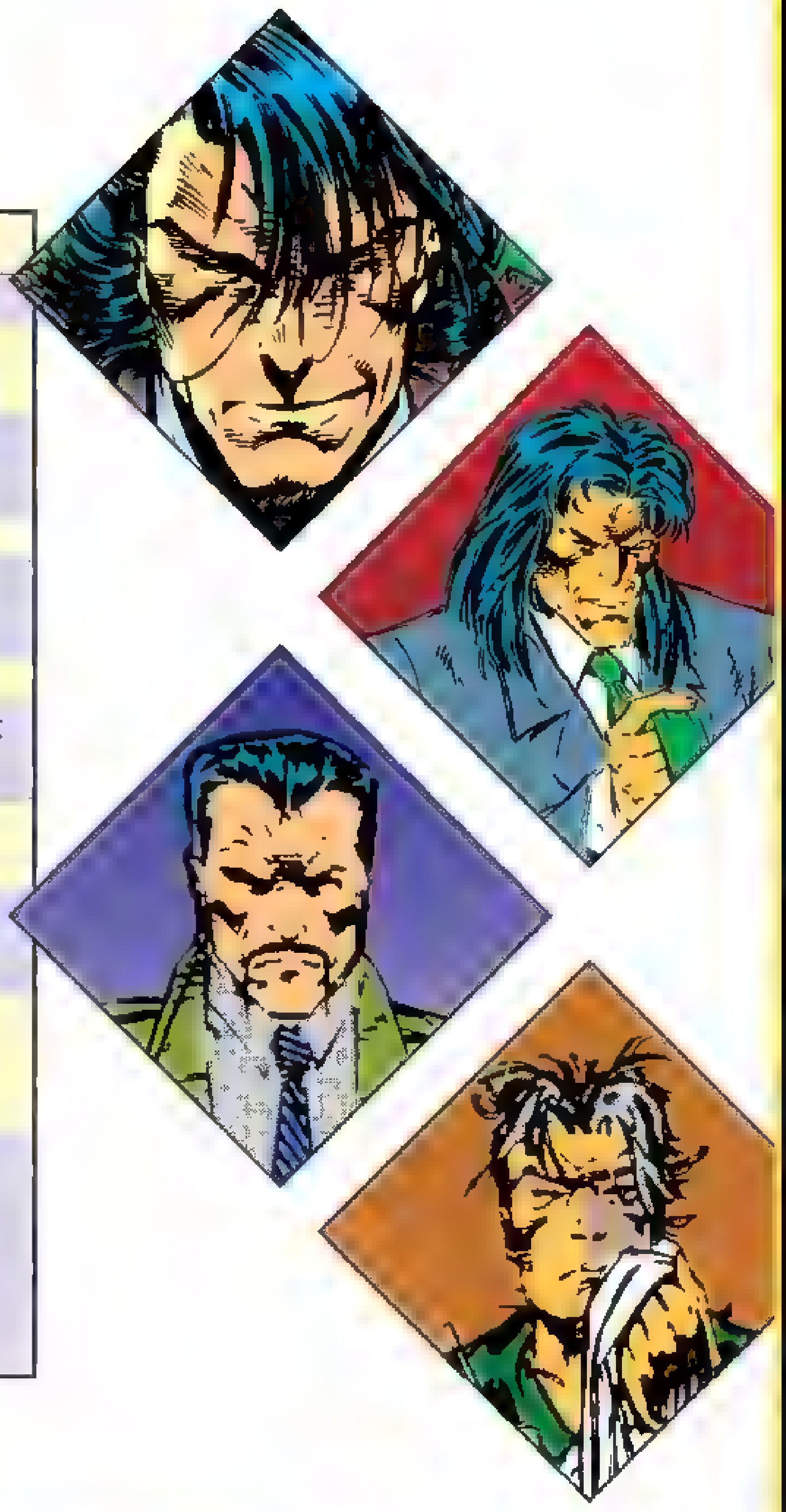
They do have super powers, but it's usually weird energy powers that are hard to distinguish (one guy is a human satellite dish; how useful is *that* in a fight?). If you see an Acolyte just assume he shoots blast beams out of his hands and you'll probably be close enough.



MUTANT-YAKUZA AXIS

These "honorable men" talk a lot while trying to stab each other in the back. It would be nice if they would just fight it out on their own time and then the X-Men could whale on the winner.

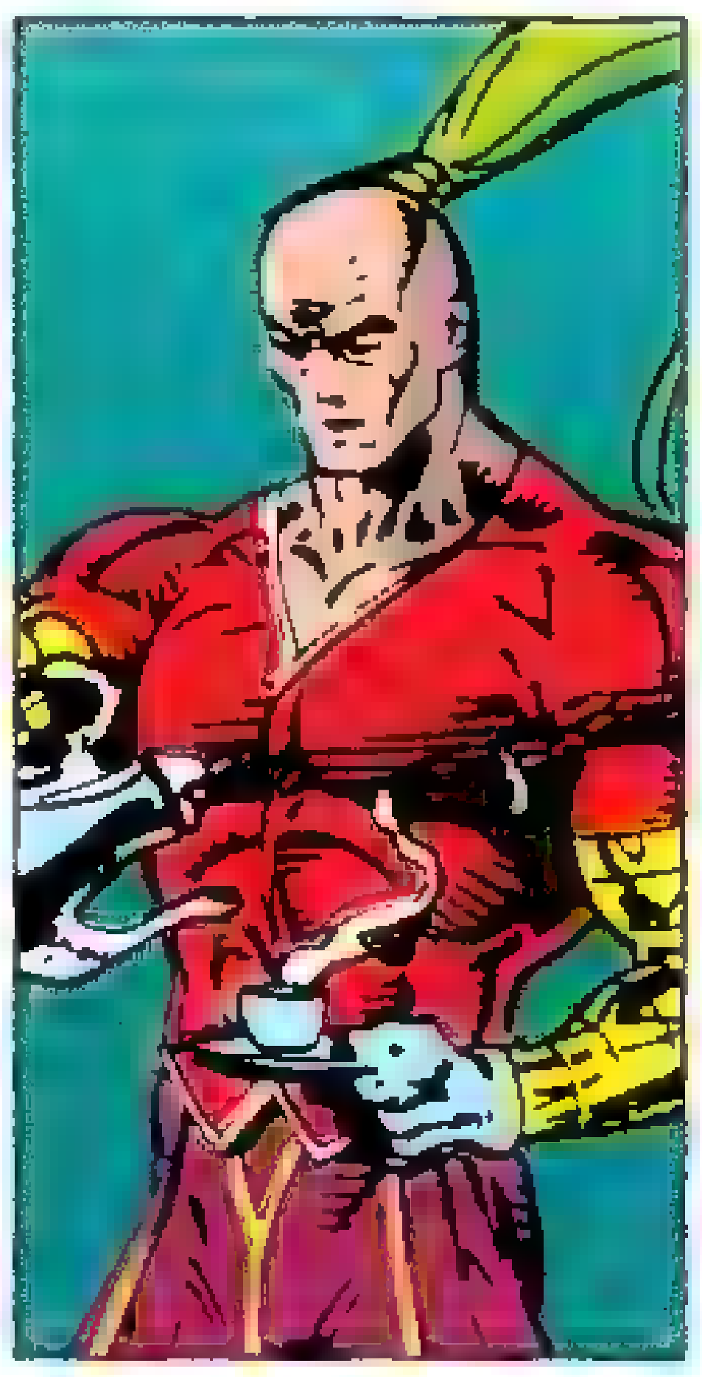
SHINOBI SHAW	MATSU'O	NYOIRIN	TATSU'O
• Japanese	• Japanese	• Japanese	• Japanese
• Crime lord posing as a businessman	• Crime lord posing as a businessman	• Crime lord posing as a businessman	• Crime lord posing as a businessman
• Wears really expensive suits	• Wears really expensive suits	• Wears really expensive suits	• Wears really expensive kimonos
• Obscenely wealthy	• Obscenely wealthy	• Obscenely wealthy	• Obscenely wealthy
• Upstart	• Not an Upstart but likes to pretend he is	• Not an Upstart and doesn't pretend he is	• Not an Upstart and doesn't care if he is
• Hair problems	• Hair problems and a scar	• Uses hair care products	• Hair problems
• Hates father	• Father unknown	• No problem with father	• No problem with father, but hates Iceman (of all people)
• Super powered	• No super powers, but hangs with Omega Red	• No super powers, but knows Silver Samurai	• No super powers, but uses Cyberai warriors
• Often found in hot tubs with babes	• Often found in hot tubs (but not with Shinobi Shaw)	• No hot tub data	• No hot tub data
• Didn't have a Psylocke, but does have a drinking problem	• Did have a Psylocke	• Did have a Psylocke	• Didn't have a Psylocke
Comments: Seems to have unnatural fear of hair-care products.	**Comments:** Needs to be seriously slapped around for starting this whole Psylocke/Kwannon deal.	**Comments:** Needs to find a new servant; Silver Samurai has been clocked by every hero on the block, including Ka Zar's pet kitty, Zabu.	**Comments:** Ought to find some friends his own age.

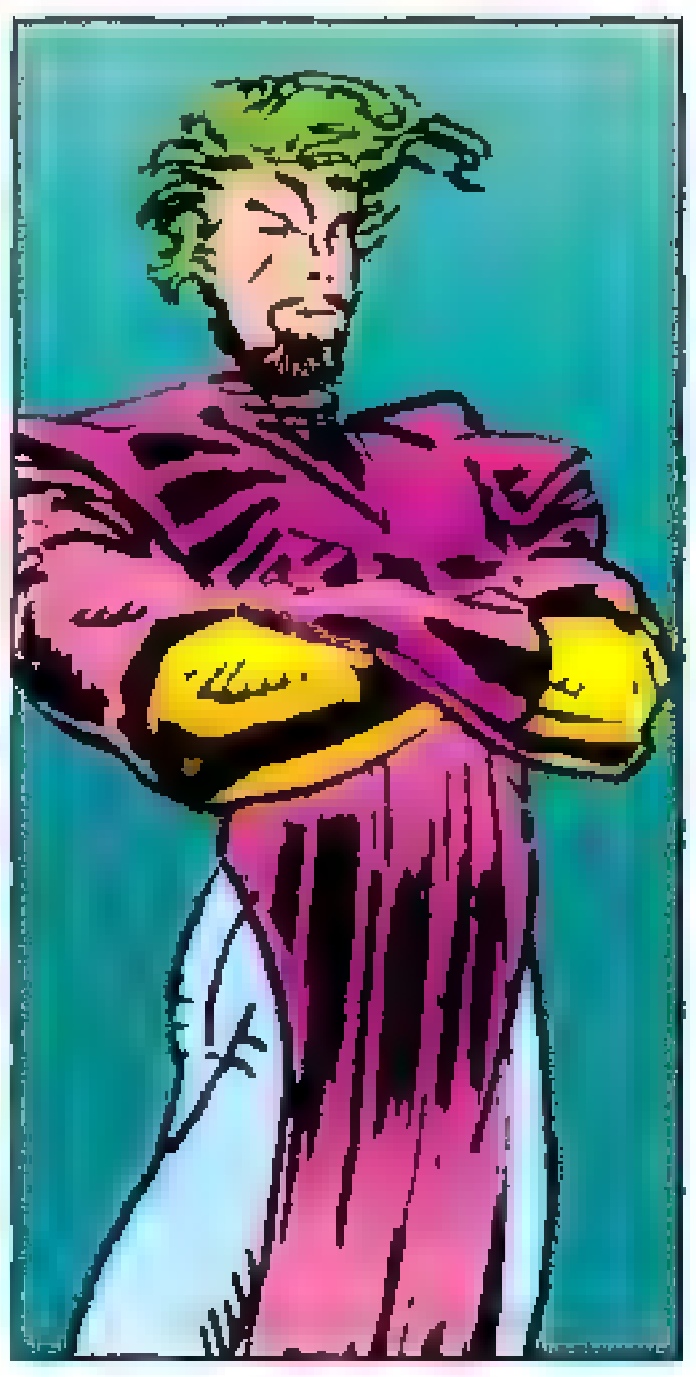


THE YOUNG GENTRY

These two fellows have marvelous speaking voices, a taste for fine living, and the manners of a cultured British gentleman — like, say, Jack the Ripper.

GIDEON	SIR TREVOR FITZROY
• Stylish green coif	• Stylish green coif
• Belongs to a rich, elitist, secret society	• Belongs to a rich, elitist, secret society
• Enjoys an evening of fine torture	• Enjoys an evening of fine torture
• Immortal	• Not immortal
• Has existed from earliest times	• Has existed in many different time zones
• External High Lord	• Upstart Pretty Boy
• Takes other peoples' powers in order to kill them	• Takes other peoples' energy in order to kill them
• Pet scientist: Mr. Joshua	• Pet scientist: Bantam
• Looking for a new High Lord to manipulate	• Looking for a new X-Man to kill
• Father probably died in the Flood	• Father threw him in a pit to die
• Hates Cannonball	• Hates Bishop
• Butt was kicked by X-Force	• Butt was kicked by X-Men
Comments: Has good table manners and offers solid tips on mutual funds.	**Comments:** Actually deserved to be thrown into a pit to die. Unfortunately, the pit wasn't deep enough.





REBELS WITHOUT A CAUSE

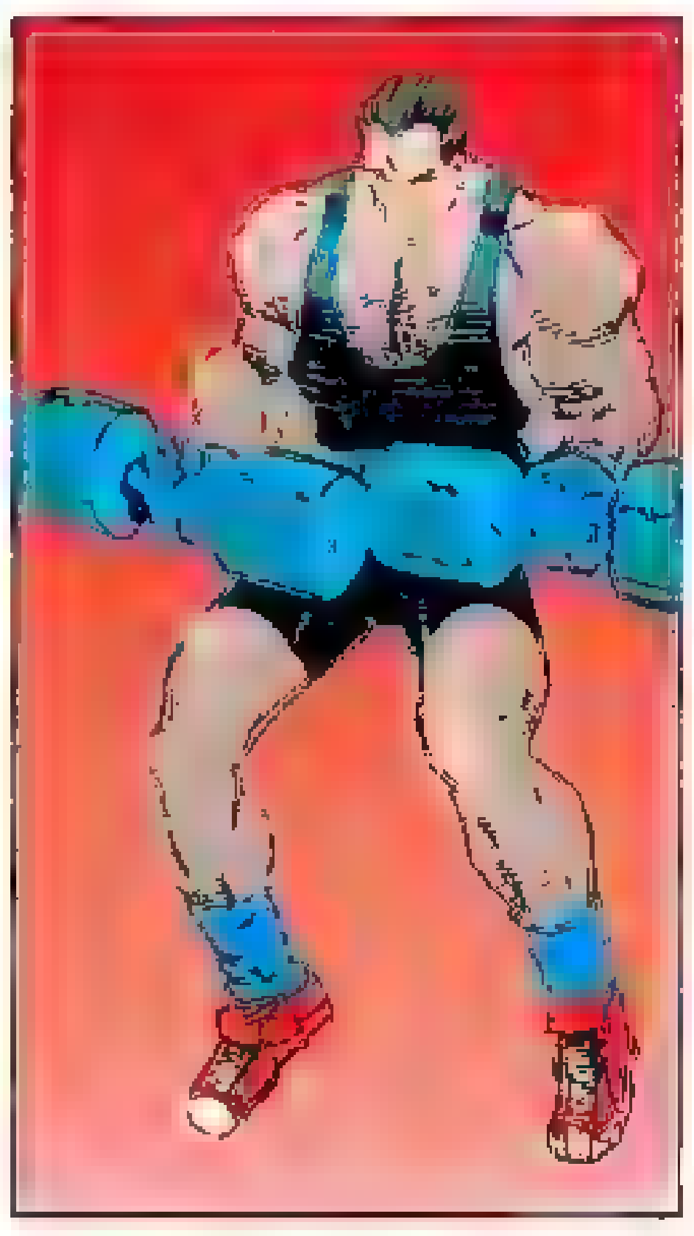
The post Baby Boom MTV generation of mutant super-villains: pampered, prosperous, and attention spans measured in microseconds. The only things that interest them are games and violence. Feel good about the future.

UPSTARTS

The warning signs of being an Upstart:

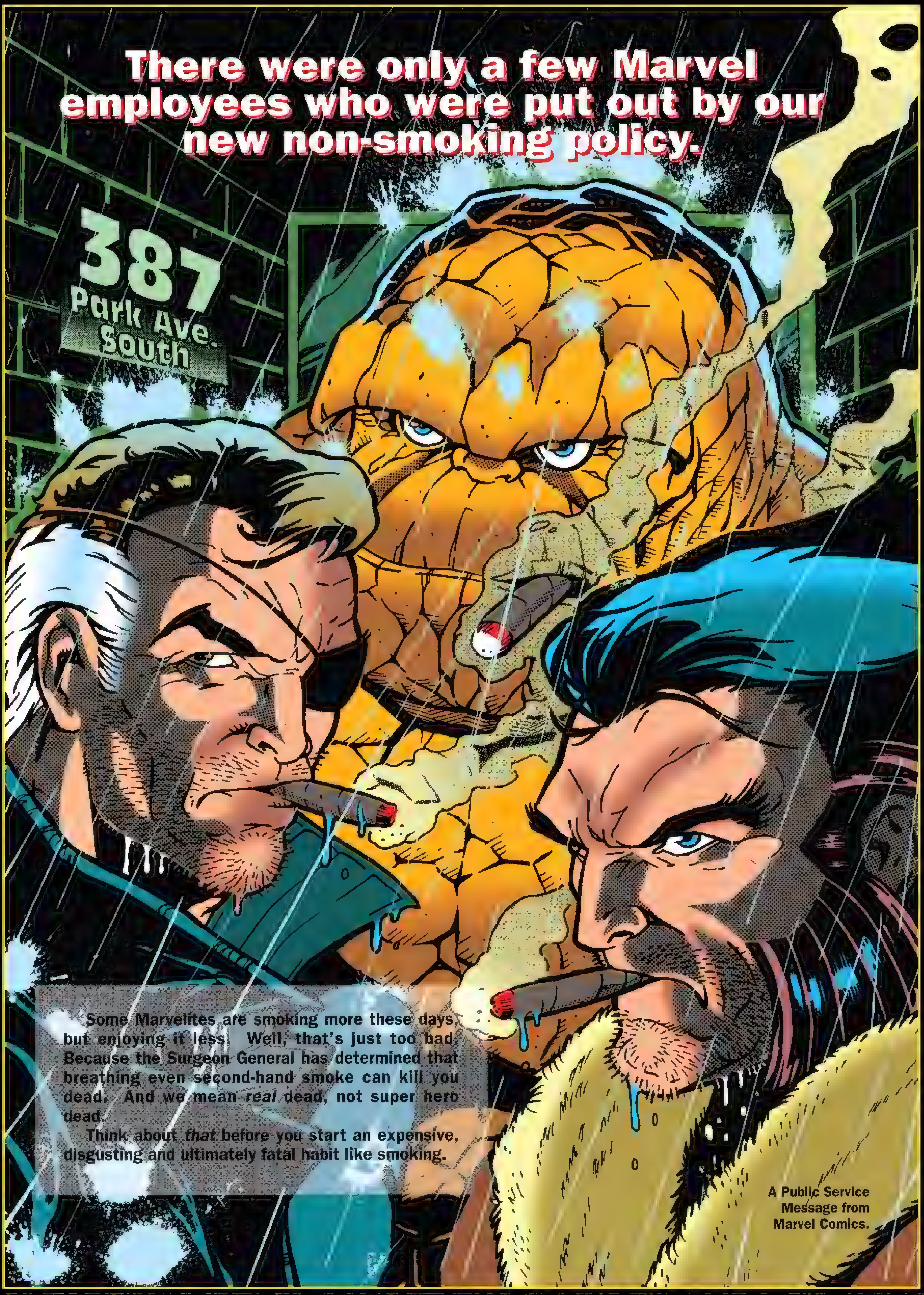
1. Too much money
2. Too much free time
3. Too much hair
4. Hate your father
5. Like to kill the X Men
6. Like to kill the Hellfire Club Inner Circle
7. Pretty much like to kill anybody
8. Squabble over the rules every time you play a game
9. Just plain insufferable

Comments: The Upstarts waste far too much time trying to kill the X-Men; they need to start subverting countries or threatening the world from secret satellites like their fathers' generation of mutant super villains did.



Unfortunately, this is only the tip of the iceberg. A comprehensive guide to all mutant villains would have taken up this entire magazine, and then some. There are hundreds more mutant meanies out there; scads of weirdos like Slayback, Sinsear, Omega Red, and the Soul Skinner, all of whom look like George Romero extras. Then there's Random and Hazard, who chose their code names with a blindfold and a dictionary. And you would need a supercomputer to keep track of the plethora of faceless, nameless, Howitzer-toting, grudge-bearing, battle-suited, cybernetic, mercenary, kill-crazy goon squads out there.

So just stay indoors.


There were only a few Marvel employees who were put out by our new non-smoking policy.
387 Park Ave. South
A Public Service Message from Marvel Comics.

Some Marvelites are smoking more these days, but enjoying it less. Well, that's just too bad. Because the Surgeon General has determined that breathing even second-hand smoke can kill you dead. And we mean *real* dead, not super hero dead.

Think about *that* before you start an expensive, disgusting and ultimately fatal habit like smoking.

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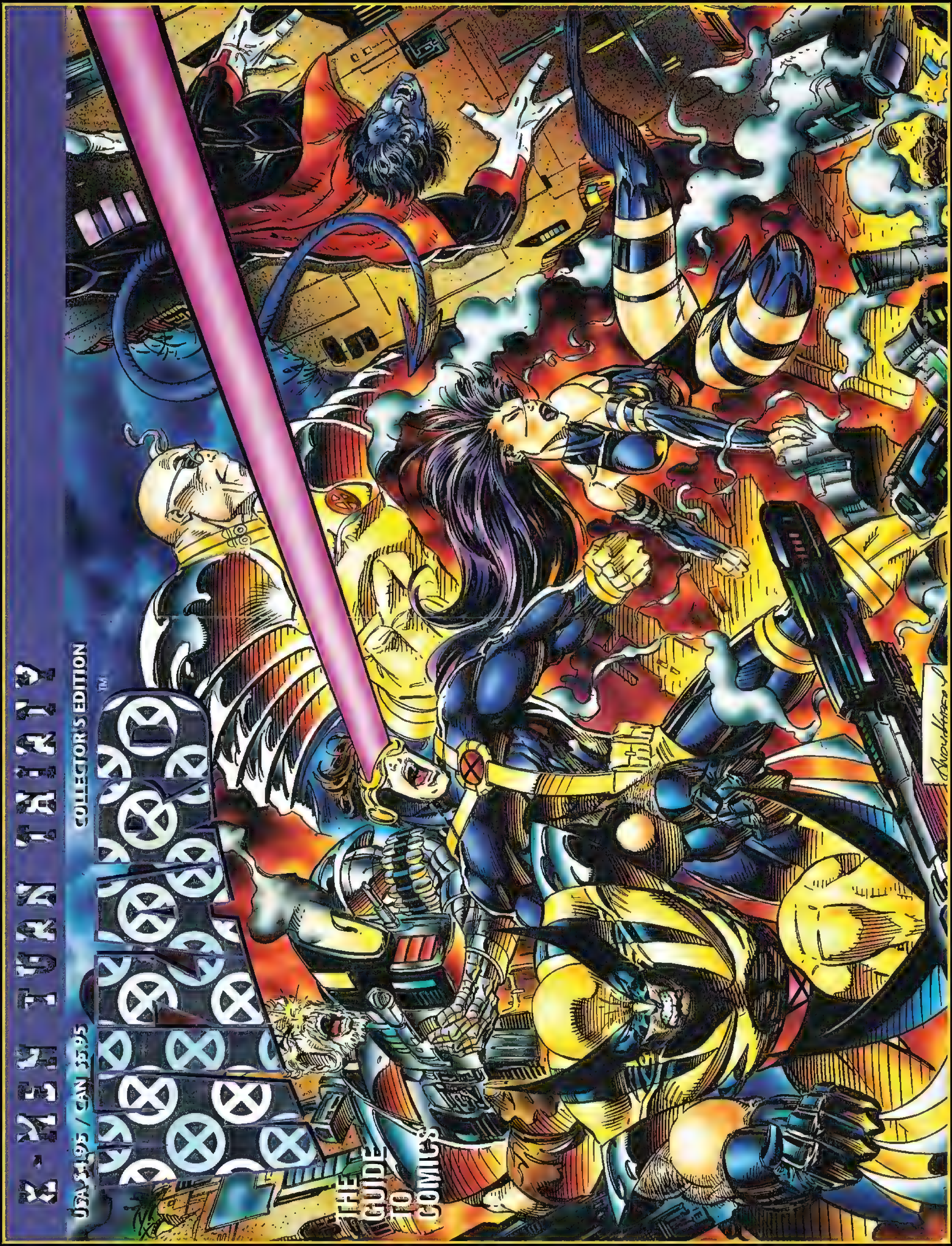
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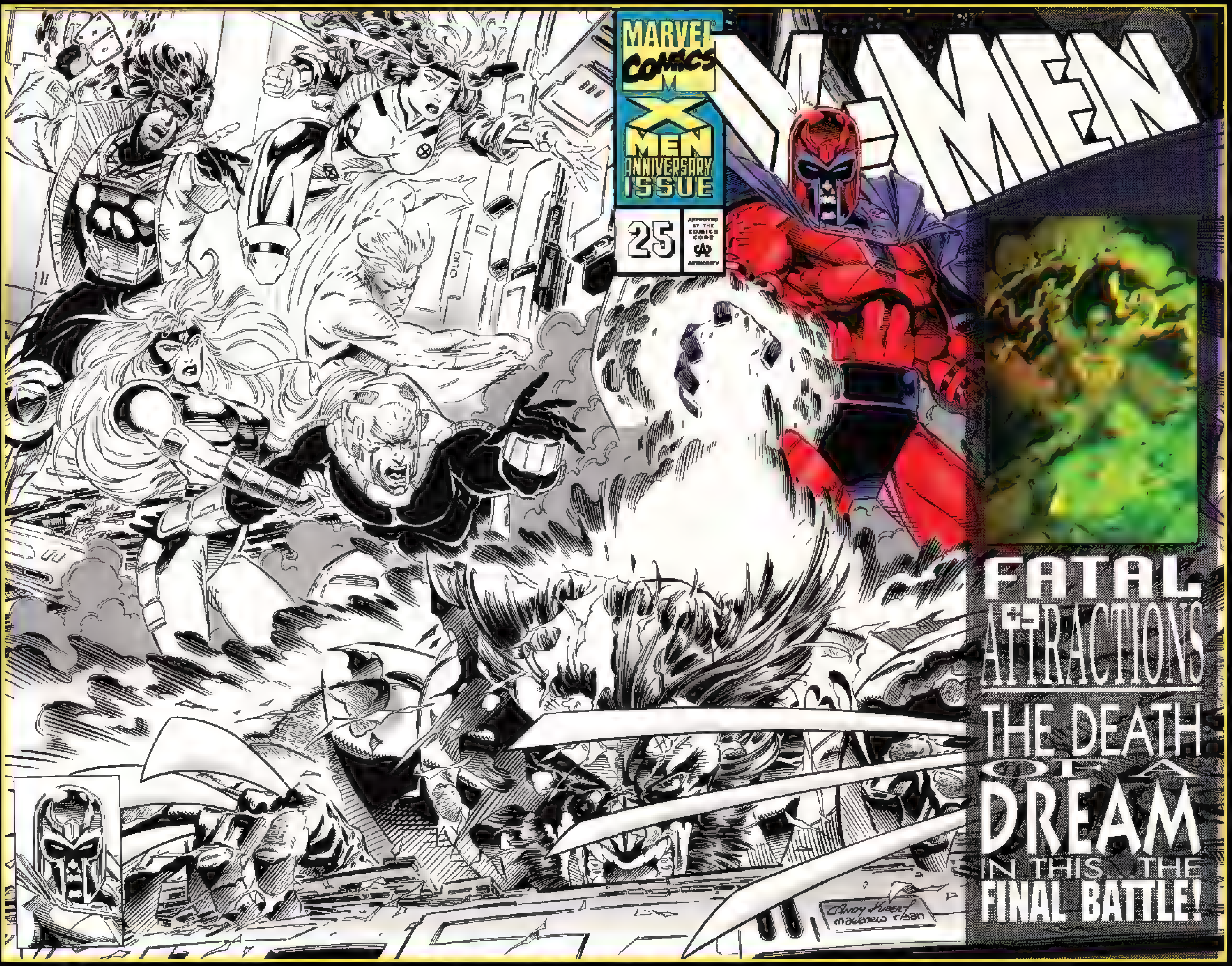
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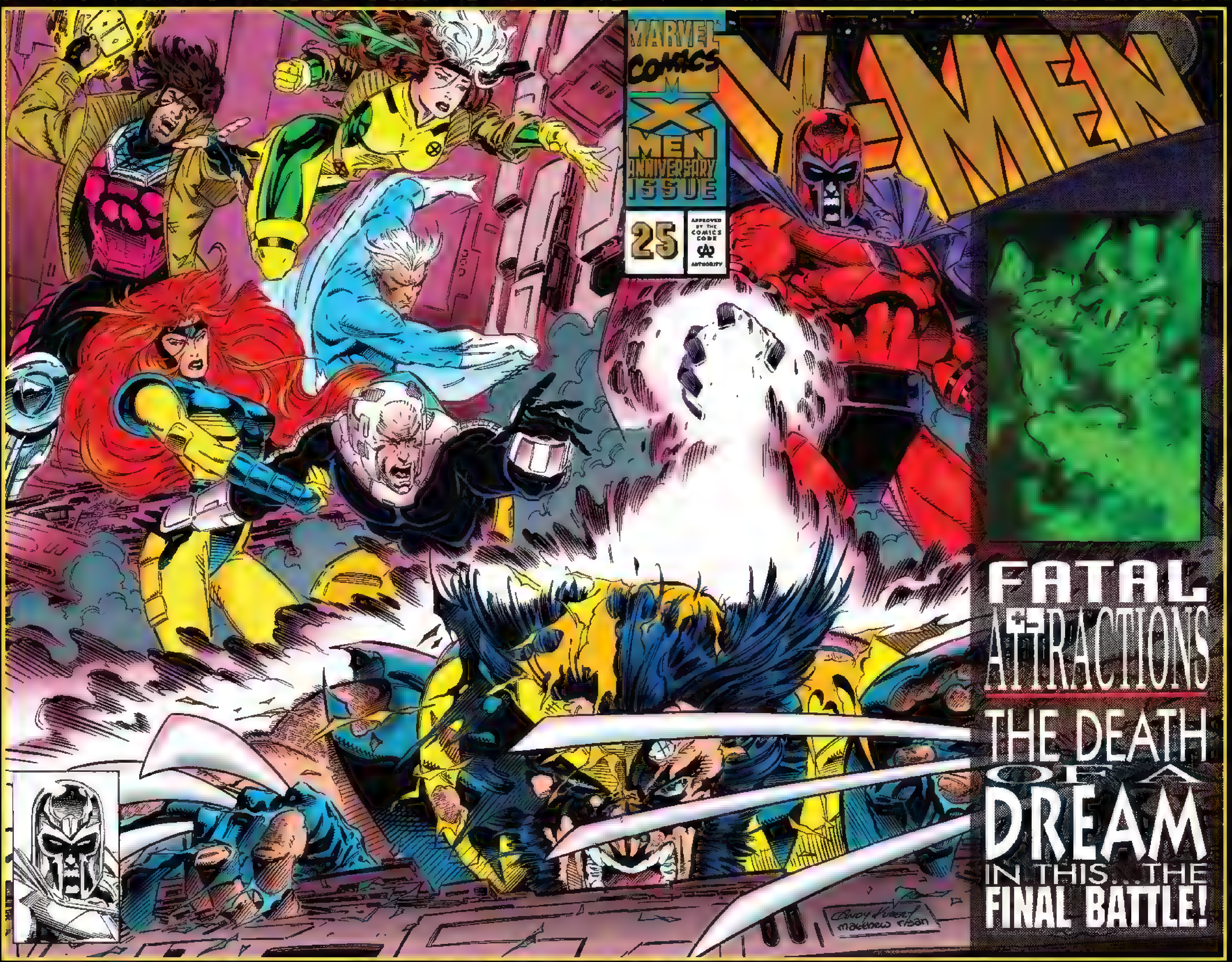
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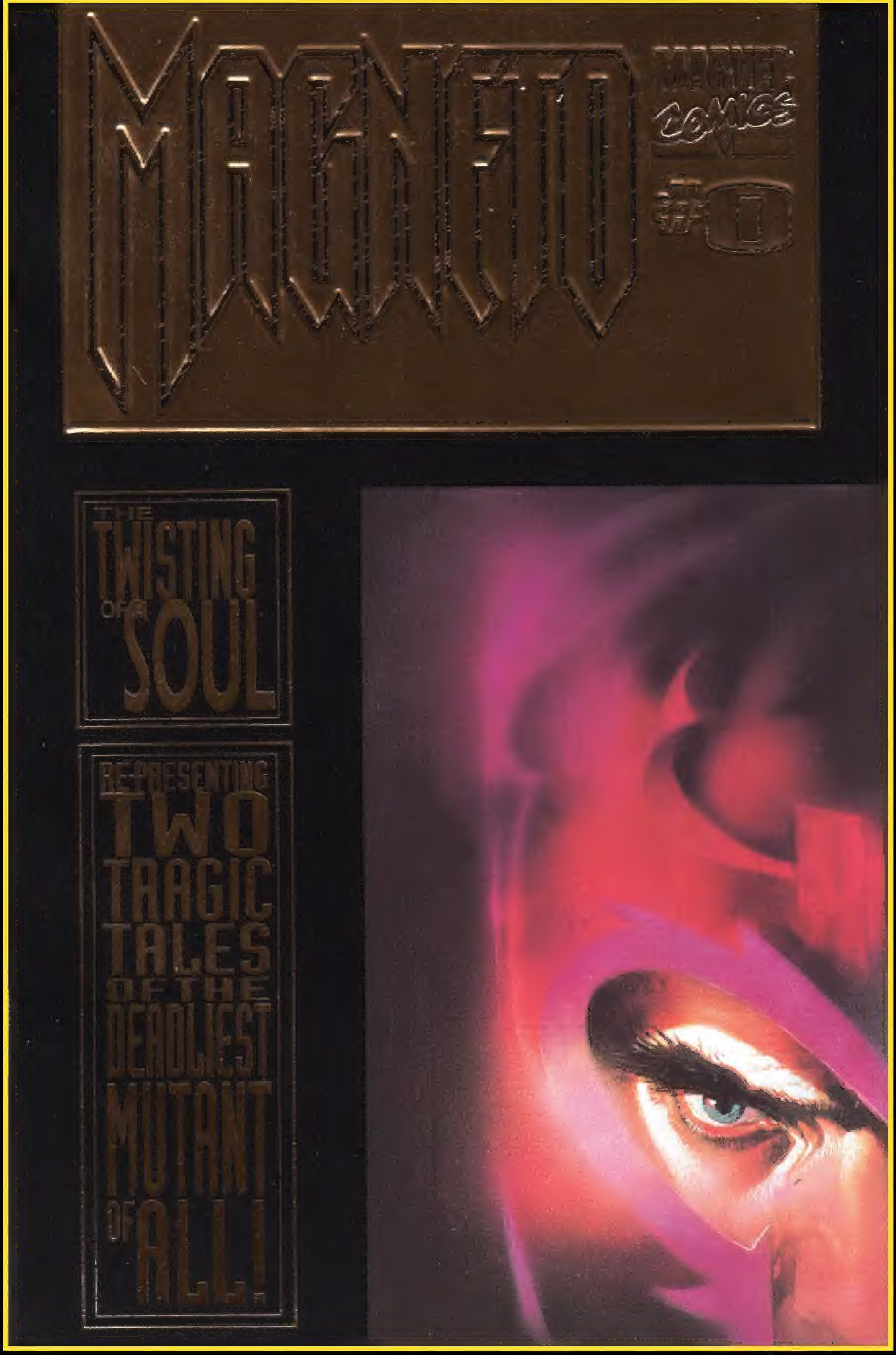
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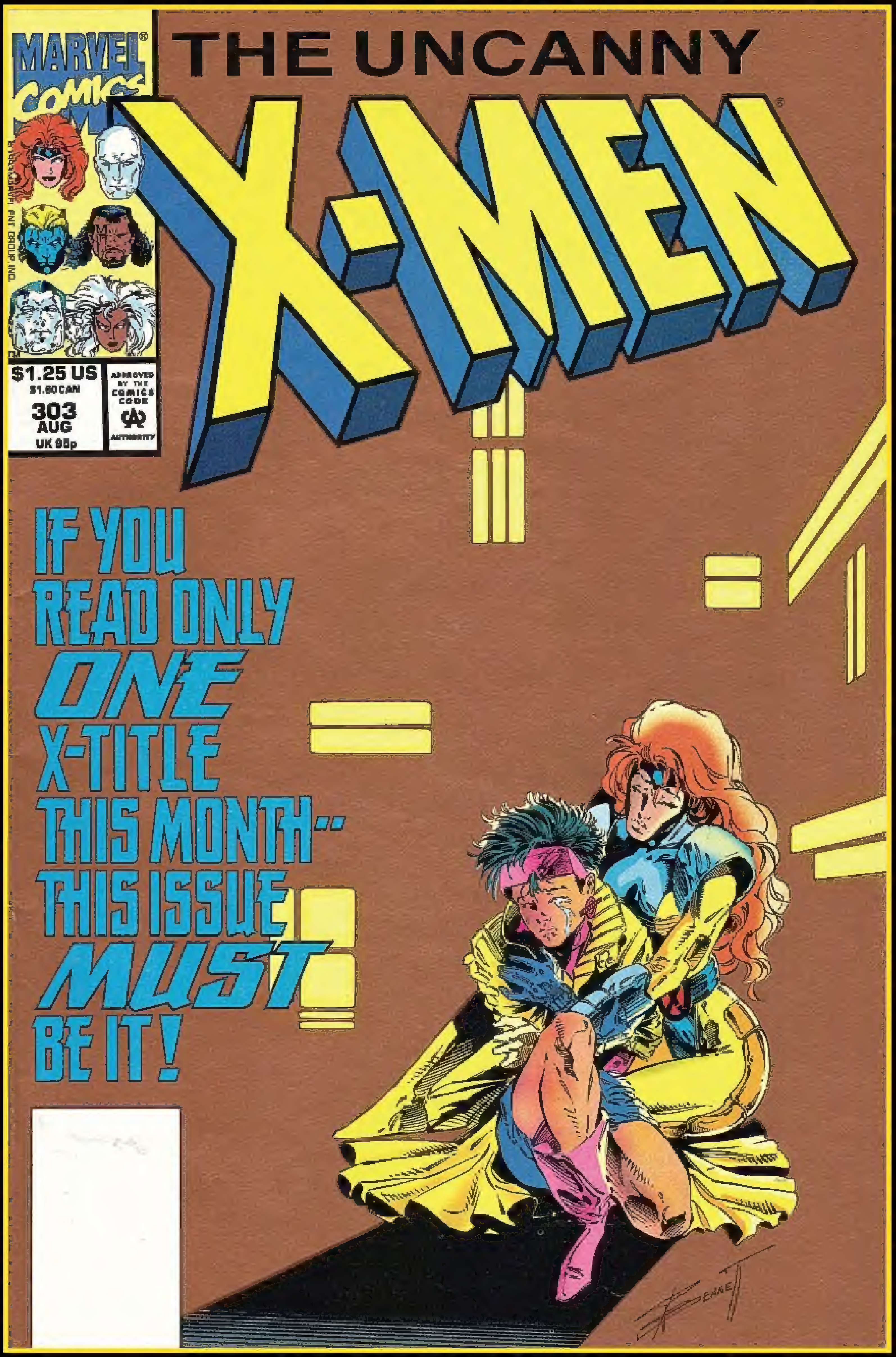
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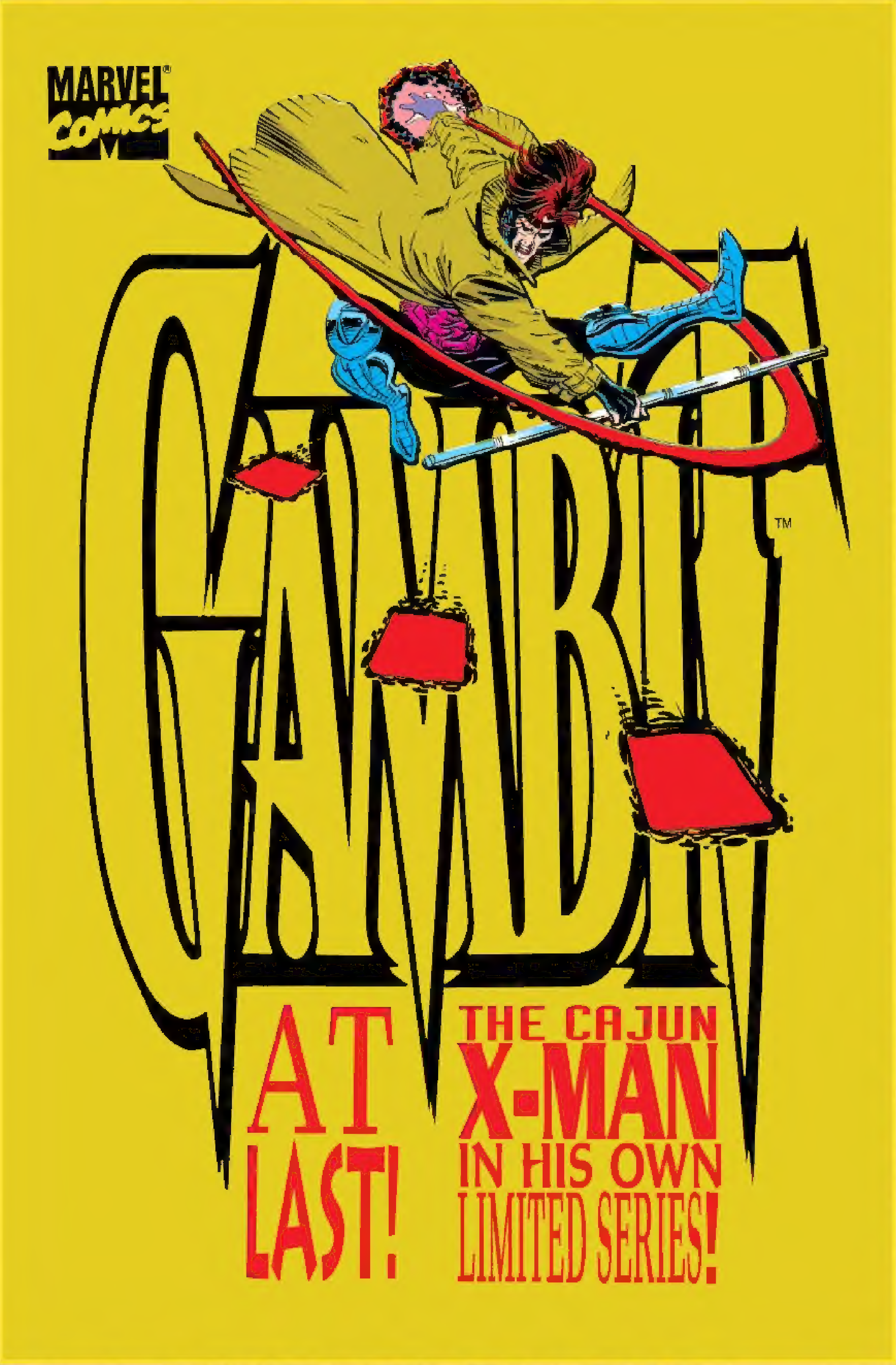
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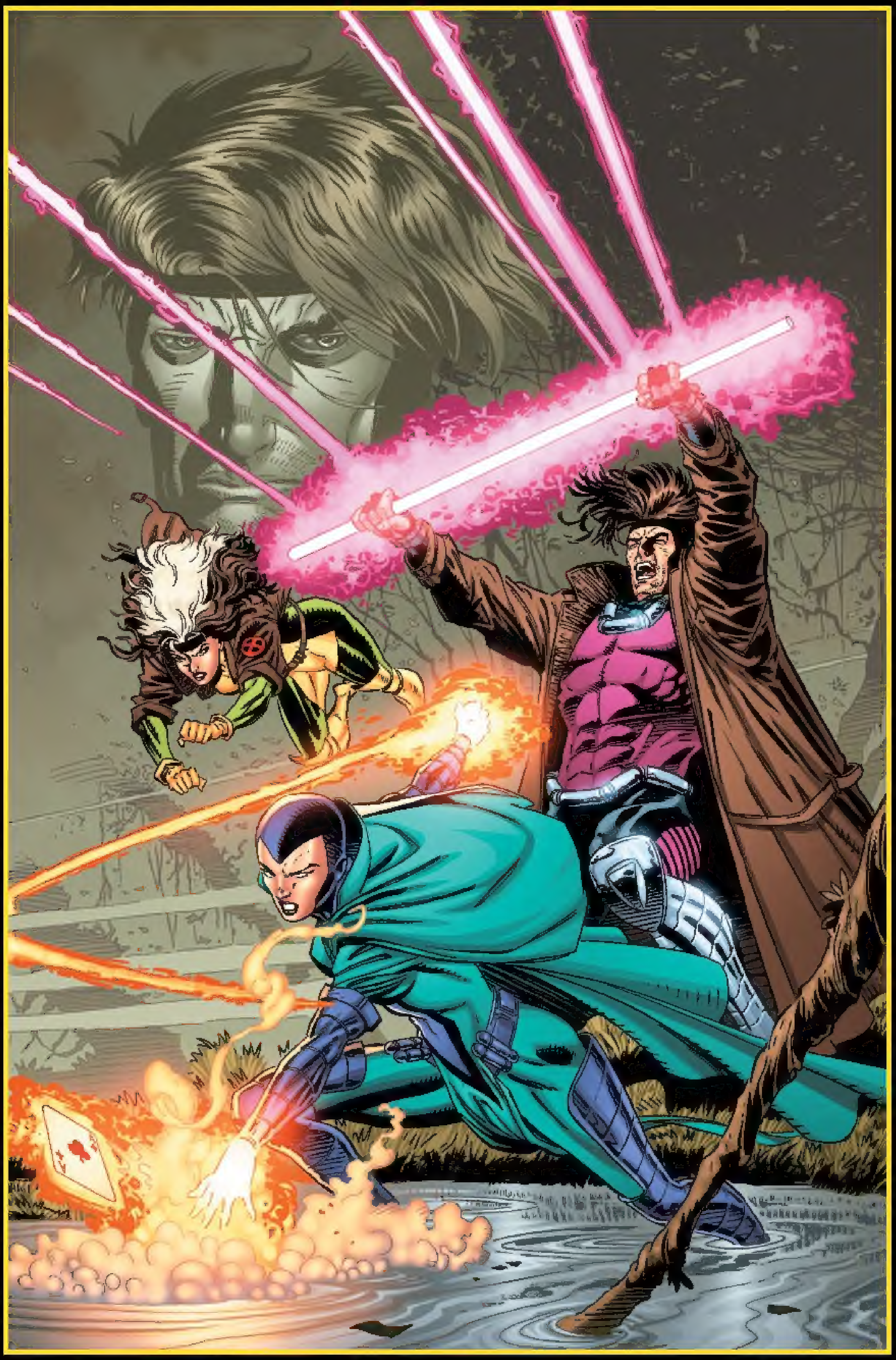

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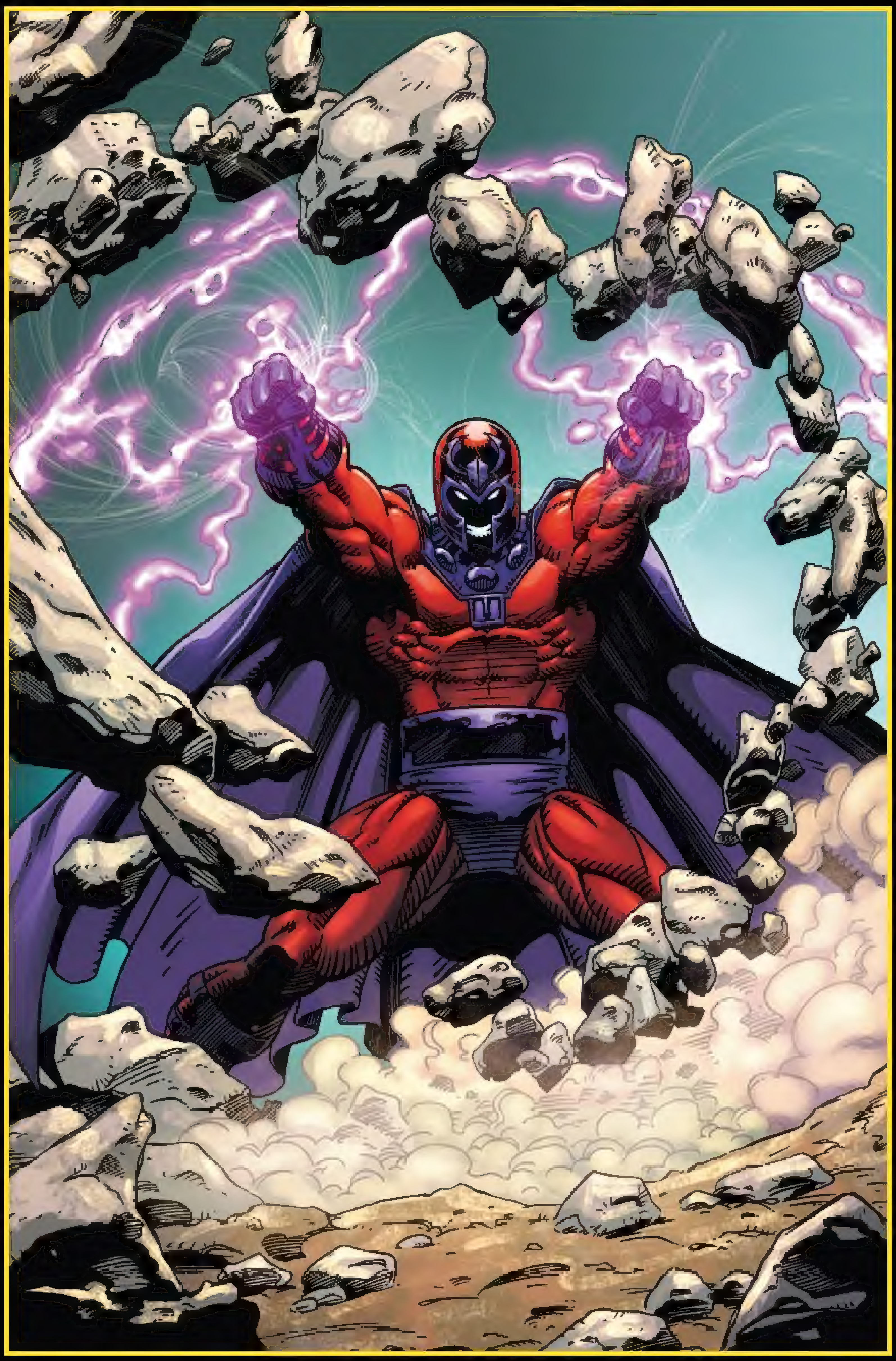

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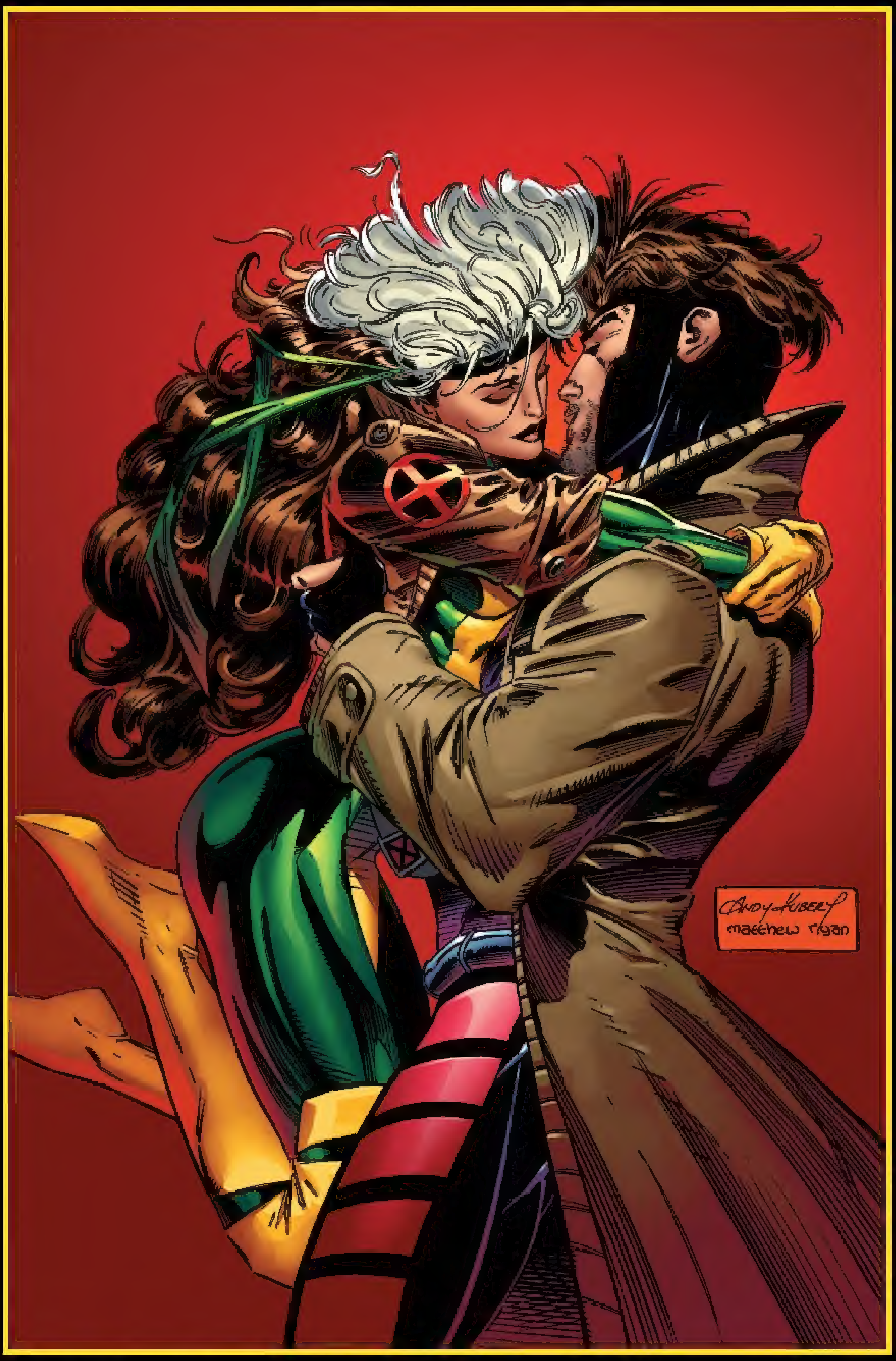
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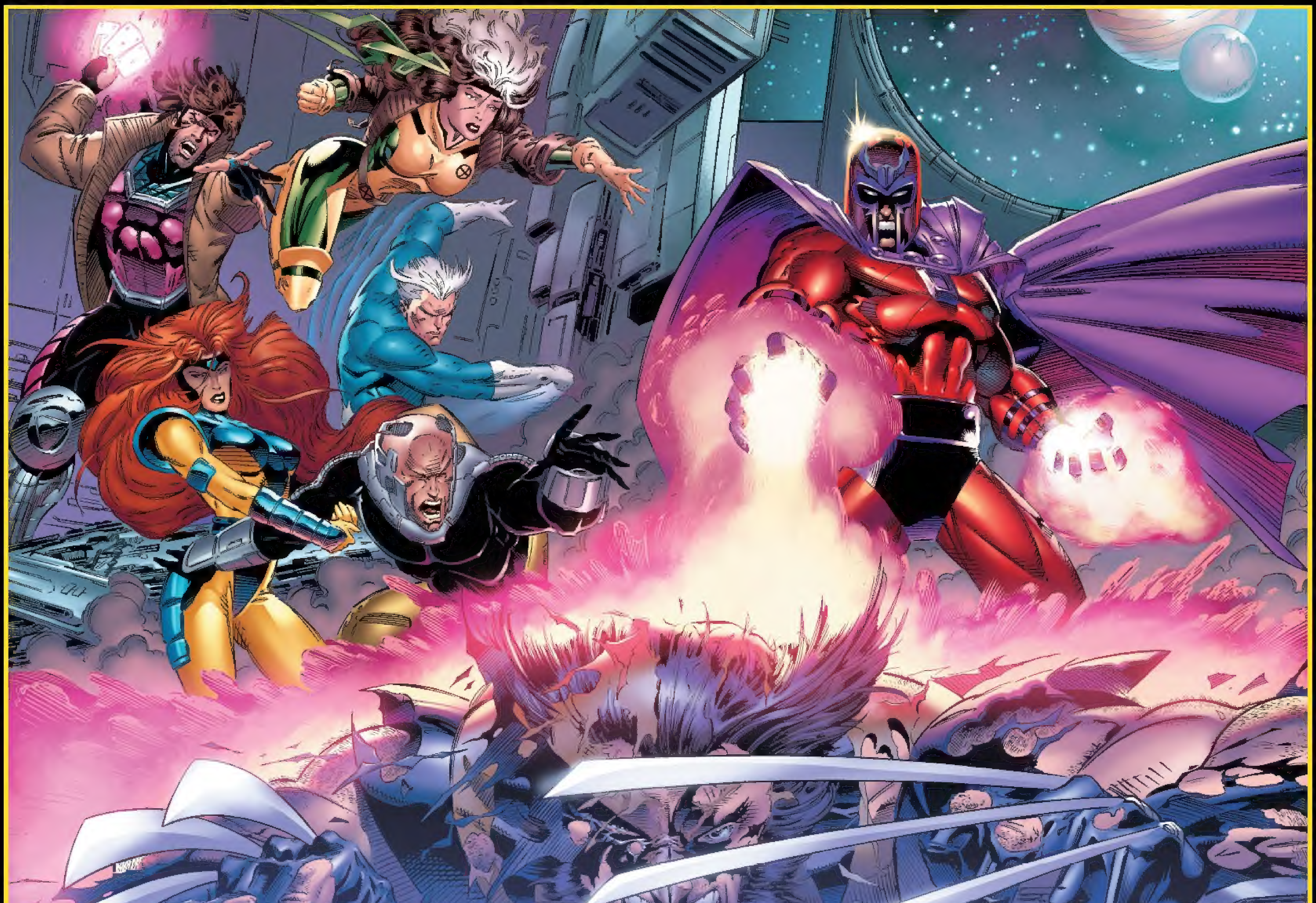
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